WEDNESDAY
April 15, 2026

BENGALURU
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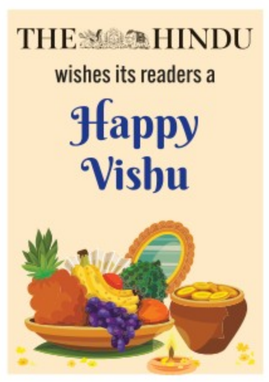
NEARBY

CM's political secretary Naseer Ahmed sacked

BENGALURU
Following alleged anti-party activitiesthe government has issued a notification removing Naseer Ahmed, MLC, as political secretary to the Chief Minister. » PAGE 4



OPPORTUNITIES » PAGE 3

Centre moots inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats based on 2011 Census

- Govt. circulates drafts of Constitution Amendment Bill and Delimitation Bill
- If proposals are accepted, share of Lok Sabha seats of southern States will shrink
- The Bills propose to raise strength of Lok Sabha to a maximum of 850 seats

Varghese K. George
Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

States that have stabilised their populations could see their share of representation in Parliament shrinking if proposals in the drafts of a Constitution Amendment Bill and a Delimitation Bill circulated by the Centre become law.

The Budget Session is reconvening on Thursday to consider the Constitution (131st) Amendment Bill and the Delimitation Bill, which the government says are aimed at expediting the implementation of 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies.

The Congress said the government was using women's reservation as a facade to railroad inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats without consultation, and ahead of the 2029 general election. "We will oppose this backdoor delimitation. We are 100% for women's reservation and demand its immediate implementation within the existing strength of the Lok Sabha and Assemblies," Congress MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi said. "In the proposals there is not a whisper of the repeated assurance by the government that the inter-State seat distribution percentages will remain intact."

The proposals emphatically seek to change the seat distribution – indeed, that is stated in the objects and reasons of the Constitutional Amendment Bill itself.

The statement notes that "while the freeze of seats on the basis of population figures of the 1971 Census served an important policy purpose, the country's demographic profile has since undergone substantial changes, as reflected in the population figures of the latest published census, including significant inter-State and intra-State population shifts." The draft Delimitation Bill mandates that "it shall be the duty of the Commission to readjust, on the basis of the latest census figures, the allocation of seats in the House of the People to the States."

If these proposals are enacted, the Hindi heartland States will see their share of Lok Sabha seats rise from 38.1% to 43.1%, while the southern States will see theirs shrink from 24.3% to 20.7%.

In combination, the Bills propose an inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats based on the latest Census figures and an increase in the size of the Lok Sabha to a maximum of 850 seats – 815 for States and 35 for Union Territories – against the current ceiling of 550, while carving out 33% for women.

Under the existing constitutional scheme, Lok Sabha seats are distributed between States on the basis of the 1971 Census and within each State on the basis of the 2001 Census. Article 82 provides that this arrangement will continue "until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2026 have been published".

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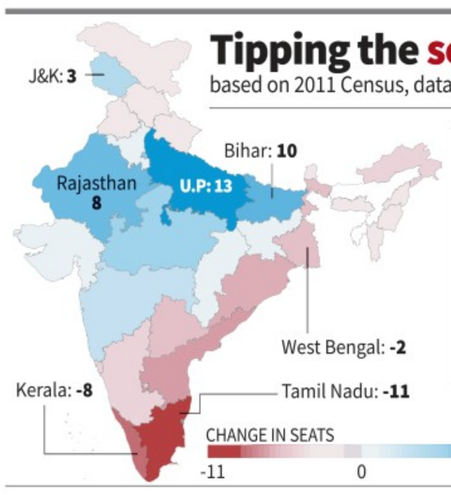
PM'S OPEN LETTER
» PAGE 8

Tipping the scales As delimitation of constituencies for the Lok Sabha is to be carried out based on 2011 Census, data show this could unevenly impact various States/regions, especially the South



The South's share in the delimited Parliament will fall from 24.3% to 20.7%, while the Hindi heartland's share will increase from 38.1% to 43.1%

Region	% increase in seats	As a share of 543 seats	As a share of 850 seats
East	48.7%	14.4%	13.7%
Hindi heartland	76.8%	38.1%	43.1%
North-East	33.3%	4.4%	3.8%
North-Non-Hindi	58.3%	4.4%	4.5%
South	33.3%	24.3%	20.7%
West	56.4%	14.3%	14.4%
Grand total	56.5%	100%	100%

Map shows seats gained/lost due to the proposed delimitation exercise based on Census 2011 population, when compared with that of a proportional increase in seats. Red depicts States that could lose seats, blue shows those with gains

Dangerous shift: Siddaramaiah

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah opposed the proposal, saying, "If numerical strength begins to determine power, the need for broad-based support across the country will diminish. That is a dangerous shift."

14 killed in power plant blast

Smoke billows after an explosion at a power plant in Sakti district of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday. PTI

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

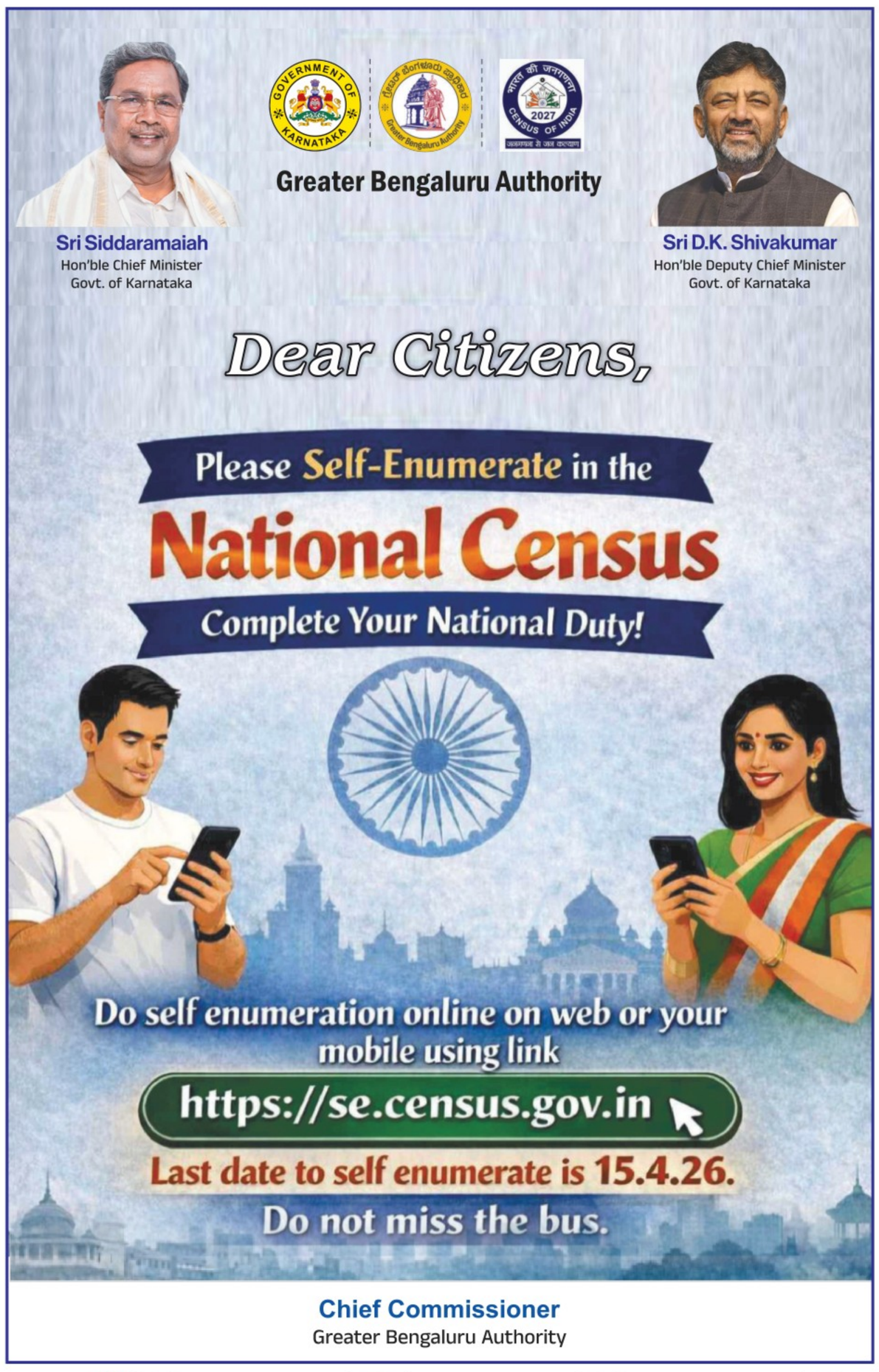
At least 14 workers were killed and 20 injured after a boiler exploded at a power plant in Sakti district of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday.

Sakti Superintendent of Police Prafull Thakur said the explosion took place around 2 p.m. at the Vedanta Ltd. power plant in Singhitarai village.

"Fourteen workers have died and at least 20 sustained injuries. Police and district administration teams are at the spot," he said late in the evening. The injured were shifted to hospitals in Sakti and Raigarh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai expressed grief over the incident. The Vedanta Limited Chhattisgarh Thermal Power Plant, in a statement, said the incident took place at the Unit 1 boiler plant.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8



Nitish resigns; Samrat to become Bihar Chief Minister

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary is set to become the State's first BJP Chief Minister after he was elected as the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party and NDA legislative parties on Tuesday.

He met Governor Syed Ata Hasnain to stake his claim to form the new government in the State and is likely to take oath at the Raj Bhavan on Wednesday along with a few select leaders, including two Deputy Chief Ministers from the Janata Dal (United).

Mr. Choudhary's election followed days of suspense and speculation, and came an hour after Nitish Kumar officially resigned as Bihar's longest serving Chief Minister.

Mr. Kumar, the leader of the JD (U), became a Rajya Sabha MP last week. In a post on X, he listed his government's achievements.

Starting his day by offering floral tributes to Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar on his birth anniversary in Patna, he reached Raj Bhawan along with senior NDA leaders at 3 p.m. and submitted his resignation to the Governor.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN
» PAGE 10

If we have to become a global superpower, we need a system to produce it

Ghosal says that bringing quality coaches to India will be the first step in this direction; feels that players are currently being produced mainly due to personal drive and initiative; opines that there's enough depth in the men's ranks to defend the Asian Games gold

GETTY IMAGES

INTERVIEW

Saurav Ghosal

K. Keerthivasan

One of India's finest squash players, Saurav Ghosal, has always been someone who put 100% into whatever he did. After retiring from professional squash in June last year due to a hip issue, the first Indian male player to break into the World's top-10 has remained active on several fronts.

He was recently appointed Sports Commissioner of World Premier Squash and is the Director of High-Performance Sports at Agilitas Sports, an innovation-led sportswear and athleisure solutions platform.

In an interview to *The Hindu*, the 39-year-old, the owner of 11 PSA titles and also an Asian Games/Commonwealth Games medallist, and a record 13-time senior National men's champion, spoke about his role of Sports Commissioner, India's chances of defending its men's team gold at the Asian Games later this year, the future of fast-rising Anahat Singh and what it will take for Indian squash to become a powerhouse like Egypt. Excerpts:

What does the role of Sports Commissioner of World Premier Squash entail?

From the back-end, my role is all about fleshing out the league's format, what the Artificial Intelligence qualification system is going to be, liaisoning with the players to make sure that they are on board. We are very, very fortunate to have PSA and WorldSquash on board with us. It's important that they have an open mind for something like this. And they've been great partners to have helped us bring this to life, at least to launch it now. And hopefully, I'll be able to do a good job and create a concept and an event IP, which will be extremely engaging and entertaining for the entire ecosystem involved. The whole point is to democratise it as much as possible, bridge the gap between the professional and the amateur recreational kind of cohort population and bring them and consolidate them into the ecosystem. Then, create an engaging and entertaining format for people who are watching.

The League is unlike any other currently on, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) being used

Yes. To qualify for the grand final, there's going to be an AI-based qualification kind of system where basically you log on to this particular app with the intricate details being out soon. You log on to the app, select different challenges or condition games, and just video yourself. And the AI does its thing and scores you on different things and different parameters. And you have a worldwide leaderboard. The top eight men and top eight women qualify for the grand final where they will be on court playing a novel format in the grand final with four of the top men and women in the world. The global league finals is expected to begin in August. And the qualification, we are planning to begin on April 15.

Anahat has been the poster girl of Indian squash now. You are her mentor. How do you see her progress?

My role is communicating to Anahat and translating to her all the experience that I have gathered. Being a player at the top level, you know, both on and off the court, how to manage a professional player. I think technically am just trying to add different things to her game, making her understand what she's good at, what her squash identity needs to be built around and how she can take on the best girls in the world and leveraging what she is very good at. She's got a great mentality, she's fearless. Physically, too, she's good. Of course, she can obviously get a bit stronger, which she's working on. I think she also has great composure when the ball is moving around, which is not an easy skill to have. She's developed a lot of variations now. She has kind of remnants and a semblance of what new Nour El Sherbini (eight-time women's world champion) can do to opponents. Hopefully, she can keep improving and achieve everything that she's capable of.

Anahat said bagging the gold at the forthcoming Asian Games will be a target as bagging the gold will guarantee her a spot at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Can she do it?

She will definitely be there at the Asian Games. If you ask me whether she can win gold at the Games, I am not sure. I mean, look, there are a lot of good players. The two big ones, obviously, are Malaysia's S. Sivasangari and Satomi Watanabe of Japan, who are both top eight in the world, and playing some fantastic squash themselves. But having said that, you know, you go in trying to win it all. You do everything you can to to give yourself a realistic shot at doing that. Hopefully, she will do it. I think, look, even if she doesn't win it, I think she's in a good position to try and qualify on ranking points in two years' time for the 2028 Olympics. Her rate of progress is something that we are quite happy with. She's got a good head on

> I think a lot more players are playing now, starting from the juniors. I think we have quantity than when I started. That is a good sign because numbers always help

her shoulders. As long as that stays and she keeps putting the work in and improving the way she does, she will get to where we think she can.

Is a place in the World's top-10 possible for Anahat?

It would be sad considering the potential she has and the seeding she has if she is not a mainstay in the top-10, if not higher, you know, over the next few years.

As far as Indian men are concerned, we have four in the top-50 and S. Velavan (WR 49) just reached there. Abhay Singh has been the best of the lot...

100% no doubt. I don't think it's ever happened before that we had four together. I think that's great. I think all the boys are strong. They all are good players in their own right. And they're all trying to kind of hustle and put the work in and get better and get higher up. And, you know, I hope that they're able to kind of keep moving forward and in the process, you know, win big things for India, starting with the Asian Games later this year. We have good depth in that sense.

It would be good to have a few more behind them as well. Abhay is a good example of someone who's maximising his potential, you know, full credit to him. He's put a lot of work into his game. He deserves to be where he's at in the rankings (WR 22) today.

What more needs to be done for India to produce top-10 players?

I think a lot more players are playing now, starting from the juniors. I think we have quantity than when I started and that is a good sign because numbers always help. We can further those numbers by taking it into schools, getting it on TV a little bit more. None of the current Indian top players train in India 365 days of the year. I never trained in India, Dipika (Pallikal) never trained, Joshna (Chinappa) didn't train 365 days of the year. I think that is something that if we are able to solve: get higher quality coaches and a system of coaches which allows you to kind of be in India, I think that will help. One is, you know, you're staying at home as a player. These players staying at home, and training with the best will be great for them and for the juniors coming up to be able to see the best players, you know, up close and personal every single day which will create benchmarks and inspire them to kind of be better. It will perpetuate the next line of players to come through as well.

Getting the right guidance at home rather than us having to go out consistently to get that exposure. That can be done, if 2-3 top quality coaches in the world do come and settle here, it will probably cost a bit of money. We need to invest in that or, get the previous generation to be involved. I don't know who is really going to do it. But I think the crux is that: you need to get top quality people either those who have played at the top level, say World's top-10 , 20, or have produced players who have played at that level. And you must have the Indian coaches working with them on a daily basis to understand and learn what their knowledge is, what their point of views are, how are they thinking in terms of producing players, and things like that. So that in 4-5 years' time, they (Indian coaches) will also have the knowledge to understand what it takes to produce a top-20 or a top-10 player.

Can we follow Egypt's system?

Currently what we have is that we have players being produced in great part due to personal drive and personal initiatives. It's not coming out of one system per se. If we have to create or become a global superpower, like Egypt, then there needs to be a system which continuously produces it. And when I say system, I don't necessarily mean that it must centralised in one place. It can be spread out, which is what Egypt is like. In Egypt, it's spread out in two cities of Cairo and Alexandria. Even in these cities, it's spread out in different clubs. But all these clubs have systems which continuously produce top junior players who then graduate to become top professional players.

Can India do well in the Asian Games where the men's team is defending the gold and can we perform well in singles (men) as well?

We are capable. We have good depth in our team. They need to work for it. And I'm sure they know that themselves. Malaysia's Yow (Ng Eain Yow) is going to be men's top seed and he's going to be the overwhelming favourite. If Qatar's Abdulla Mohd Al-Tamimi is able to recover from his injury and come back in time with some sort of match practice and sharpness, he will be extremely dangerous as well. There are quite a few from Malaysia and Hong Kong, and I'm sure there'll be a few from Pakistan as well, who will have a shout in as well. It's a pretty level playing field in that sense.

Still, I would say that the (Indian) boys should feel confident enough and believe that they have an edge over the others, except for a fully fit Yow and Tamimi. If they are at their best, they will have an edge on paper. But I mean, there's nothing to say that they can't be beaten or anything of that sort.

In your illustrious career, you won many medals at the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. Which one is special?

There are lots of memorable things. The first Asian Games bronze medal in Doha in 2006, which was a big turning point, not just for me, but for Indian squash in general. The 2022 Commonwealth Games singles bronze medal in Birmingham was like a culmination of my entire career.

The two Asian Games men's team gold medals in 2014 and 2022-23 is something as a kid I always wanted to have and to have got two is great. Getting to the top-10 in the world was a dream always.

R. RAGU

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Shrinking green cover, urbanisation add to city's scorching summer heat

In the last decade, on several occasions, above normal temperatures have been recorded between March and May

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

During the summer of 2024, for the first time in 41 years, pre-monsoon showers eluded Bengaluru, as the city recorded its driest April in four decades. The last time Bengaluru recorded nil rainfall in April was way back in 1983.

In fact, the city received the first rainfall that year on May 2.

In the past decade, Bengaluru has witnessed increasingly hot and humid summers, a trend that experts attribute to shrinking green cover, rapid urbanisation, and global phenomena such as El Nino conditions.

There are many factors for the rising heat, and part of it is due to the impact of climate change. Over the last few years, Bengaluru has been seeing a departure from normal temperature during the summer months. K. MURALI KUMAR

Summer and the city

Bengaluru's summer months are between March and May. The normal temperature (maximum) for Bengaluru during the months of March, April, and May are 33.4°C, 34.1°C, and 33.1°C, respectively. However, in the last decade on several occasions above normal temperature has been recorded during these three months.

According to data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) for the month of March, betweeen 2016 and 2025, the highest maximum temperature recorded each year was above the normal temperature. The highest temperature in the last decade was 37.2°C, recorded on March 8, 2017. The all-time record for the highest March temperature remains 37.3°C, registered on March 29, 1996.

Likewise for April, the all-time record for highest maximum temperature was recorded on April 25, 2016, at 39.2°C. On April 29, 2024, a maximum temperature of 38.5 °C was recorded. In 2024, on several days, the maximum temperature was above 36°C.

For the month of May, the highest maximum temperature ever recorded was 38.9°C, which occurred in 1931. However this record was nearly breached in the last decade as on May 1 and 3, 2024, the city recorded a maximum temperature of 38.2°C.

Rainfall pattern

The normal rainfall for March is 14.7 mm, while Bengaluru typically receives 61.7 mm in April. However, during the last decade, March recorded 0 mm rainfall on three occasions (2019, 2021, and 2024). For April on three occasions (2020-2022) the city recorded over 100 mm rainfall. However, in 2024, 0 mm rainfall was recorded. For May, the all-time record for highest rainfall, i.e., 315 mm, was recorded in May 2025.

Rising heat

"There are many factors for the rising heat, and part of it is due to the impact of climate change. Over the last few years we have been seeing a departure from normal temperature during the summer months," said G.S. Srinivasa Reddy, former director of Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre. Ecologist T.V. Ramachandra, in his study on the linkages between urban heat islands and landscape morphology, notes that Bengaluru witnessed rapid spatial expansion in the mid-2000s following the formation of Greater Bangalore (BBMP). This expansion, driven by the incorporation of adjacent rural landscapes, resulted in the conversion of agricultural land into paved areas.

"The city's landscape witnessed a 1,078% increase in built-up area, alongside a decline of 88% in vegetation cover and 79% in water bodies. This led to the transition of the landscape from porous to paved surfaces, affecting the region's hydrology, ecology, and socio-economic aspects," the study states.

Monsoon outlook

The 2026 southwest monsoon seasonal rainfall (June to September) across Karnataka is expected to be below normal over most parts of the State. However, some regions in northeast and southeast Interior Karnataka are likely to receive normal to above-normal rainfall.

Fact sheet

Normal temperature (maximum) for Bengaluru

Month	Temperature
March	33.4°C
April	34.1°C
May	33.1°C

Highest recorded temperature (2016-2025)

Month	Temperature	Year
March	37.2°C	2019
April	39.2°C	2016
May	38.2°C	2024

All-time highest recorded temperature

Month	Temperature	Year
March	37.3°C	1996
April	39.2°C	2016
May	38.9°C	1931

Golden jackal pup rescued

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian golden jackal pup aged about 5 months rescued from the outskirts of Bengaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

An Indian golden jackal pup, aged about five months, was rescued from the outskirts of Bengaluru following a distress call to the Deputy Range Forest Officer (DRFO), Kaggalipura, on Monday.

A rescue team from PfA Wildlife Hospital, along with Forest Department officials, rescued the jackal. It was then transported to the PfA Wildlife Hospital for medical care.

The jackal was reported to be immobile at the time of rescue. Upon examination , veterinarians observed neurological symptoms, including muscle twitching, tremors and temporal twitching. PfA Wildlife Hospital officials said a blood sample was collected and sent for diagnostic evaluation.

Based on the clinical signs, the jackal's condition has been tentatively diagnosed as canine distemper, a serious viral disease that affects wild and domestic carnivores.

"The animal has been started on supportive treatment. The pup is currently under close observation and continuous care at the PfA Wildlife Hospital," PfA Wildlife Hospital said in a statement.

5, including juvenile, held for burglary

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Basaveshwaranagar police have arrested five persons, including a juvenile, for allegedly stealing valuables worth ₹17 lakh from a house in BEML Layout.

According to the police, the theft occurred on March 31 when the complainant had stepped out to practice yoga. Upon returning, she found the house lock broken and gold ornaments and cash missing.

Acting on credible leads, the police on April 3 apprehended two suspects near Dasarahalli, recovering ₹8,100 in cash and an autorickshaw used in the crime. On the same day, another accused and a juvenile were secured near Anmod village check post, taking the total number of accused to four. During interrogation, the accused allegedly confessed to the crime. The juvenile was produced before the Juvenile Justice Board.

The accused had gained the trust of the victim by assisting her with minor household tasks and used this familiarity to identify where valuables were stored.

Based on information provided by the accused, the police recovered 115 gm of gold ornaments, ₹13,400 in cash, and the autorickshaw used in the offence. The accused were produced before a court on April 9 and remanded in judicial custody.

Hippo Hamsini dies in Tyavarekoppa zoo

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA

Hamsini, the 12-year-old female hippopotamus who suffered from a severe infection following an intrauterine foetal death, died at Tyavarekoppa Tiger and Lion Safari in Shivamogga on Tuesday around 3 p.m.

This was the third pregnancy for the 12-year-old hippo. She had delivered a calf in 2024, but the young one drowned. In 2025, she delivered another, but that calf also died after being attacked by its father soon after birth.

V.M. Amarakshara, executive director of the safari, said that Hamsini was eight months pregnant and had stopped taking food. On April 10, veterinarians took blood and fluid samples for lab tests. The results suggested that Hamsini was suffering from a severe infection due to the intrauterine foetal death. The infection had spread to multiple organs, leaving the animal in critical condition.

The Karnataka Zoo Authority had deputed wildlife veterinarians and hired a consulting obstetrician-gynaecologist veterinarian to treat Hamsini. However, the animal did not respond to medication and died at 3.08 p.m. on Tuesday.

Hamsini hit the headlines after attacking Sameeksha Reddy, a young veterinarian who was a trainee at the zoo. Sameeksha had entered Hamsini's enclosure of the hippopotamus with a thermal camera to record its body temperature. On March 20, Sameeksha died in a private hospital in Shivamogga. Her death had led to questions about the safety of staff working at the zoo. The incident drew attention to the absence of a permanent wildlife veterinarian at the zoo, which is home to nearly 300 animals.

Questions about waste in property tax form baffle apartment owners

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Paying property tax has become unexpectedly tricky for apartment owners in Bengaluru this year due to a new set of questions on waste management has left them guessing their way through the form.

Residents of apartment complexes, which are treated as bulk waste generators, have been told to specify how their waste is handled. They have to choose whether it is processed within the premises, handed over to an authorised agency, or not processed through either route. However, what is most frustrating for residents is the daily waste generation figures across multiple categories and also how much of it is processed. Residents say they do not keep track of this.

Residents argue that waste in apartment complexes is collected together and managed at a common point with no flat-wise measurement, adding that they are being forced to put down approximate numbers. These entries directly impact the tax payable. If no processing method is selected, the system calculates the solid waste management fee by taking the declared daily quantity and projecting it across the year.

Under the updated property tax portal, residents are first required to indicate whether they fall under the bulk waste generator category.

A. Arun Kumar from Bangalore Apartments Federation said the new system is disconnected from how services are billed. "We don't pay water or electricity bills along with property tax."

Residents are being told to declare how much solid waste they generate every day. The portal does not even allow entries below one kilogram, residents say. Sanitary waste per flat can be as little as 100 or 150 grams, and you cannot realistically average it daily, Mr. Kumar added.

He argued that these forced estimates are inflating costs. "When you are made to enter a minimum number across categories, it all adds up. In some cases, apartments are seeing projections running into lakhs annually just for waste collection," he further said.

Apartment owners have sought a return to the earlier system.

Woman found dead after allegedly killing daughter

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 45-year-old woman allegedly killed her minor daughter before ending her life at their residence in Immadihalli in Whitefield on Tuesday. The deceased have been identified as Suvarna, 45, and her daughter Tarunya, 13. Suvarna is suspected of having smothered the girl to death and later ending her life.

According to the police, Suvarna's husband, Chandrashekar had left for work on Tuesday morning. When repeated phone calls to his wife went unanswered, he alerted his brother Vinod Kumar and asked him to check on the family. Upon reaching the house, Vinod found the room locked from the inside. He forced the door open, only to find both of them dead. The police and Scene of Crime Officers rushed to the spot after receiving information around 11 a.m. No death note was recovered from the scene. Preliminary investigations suggest that Suvarna may have been suffering from depression, reportedly due to financial stress and concerns about the family's future. The police suspect that she took the extreme step after killing her daughter, though the exact motive is yet to be confirmed.

Suvarna's brother, Manjunath, has also expressed suspicion and has sought a detailed investigation.

(If you are in distress or having suicidal tendencies, please reach out to these 24/7 helplines: KIRAN at 1800-599-0019 or Arogya Sahayavani at 104 for help.)

Writers must not look away from the most troubling things of the time, says author Arundhati Roy

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

"The genocide in Palestine was unfolding, and it still is, and I wrote this book looking at it, not looking away from it," said author Arundhati Roy, as she spoke about writing *Mother Mary Comes to Me*.

Ms. Roy was in Bengaluru on Tuesday to speak about her recent work in which she traces her relationship with her mother, Mary Roy, whom she refers to as Mrs. Roy and describes as both "storm" and "shelter".

Before highlighting her work in conversation with writer Arundhati Ghosh, Ms. Roy said that the global conversation today is "between men of war", and pointed to underlying contradictions. Referring to the leadership of the men from the "free" democratic world, Ms. Roy said they act as "envoys of a man accused in the Epstein scandal involving the abuse of young girls", even as they confront countries they accuse of hostility. "As writers, we look at these ironies, we digest them, and we write through them," she said.

Arundhati Roy during a talk on her latest book *Mother Mary Comes to Me*, in Bengaluru on Tuesday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Turning to her work, Ms. Roy highlighted her relationship with her mother, a presence that runs through the book in complicated, often contradictory ways, and added she does not carry the anger or bitterness that many readers expect from such a history. The author said she refuses to equate her experiences with bitterness and has always seen her own life "as a footnote to the things that really matter", placing it alongside, but not above, larger histories of injustice. The book, she said, is not an attempt to present a catalogue of personal suffering, but to understand what it meant to be shaped by a particular force, in this case, her mother, and how that shaped her life and choices.

Fiction and non-fiction

Ms. Roy said she finds it difficult to accept the assumption that non-fiction is simply "true" while fiction is somehow less real. "Good fiction is one of the most rarefied forms of truth," she said, suggesting that imagination often carries a deeper, more complex truth than straightforward factual narration.

She pointed out that *Mother Mary Comes to Me* itself resists easy classification, "it is the memoir of a novelist," she said. Her fictional characters, she noted, exist within the same mental and emotional landscape as her lived experiences, making it difficult to draw a clean boundary between what is remembered and what is created.

Idea of success

She also spoke at length on the idea of literary success, questioning what it means in the context of the worlds she writes about. Acknowledging that success is measured through prizes, recognition or readership, she said those markers feel superficial when set against the lives her work engages with. "Look at the things I write about. Look at the people I write about," she said, referring to those who are "battered, broken, killed, genocided", and asked how such realities can coexist with the idea of success.

Often labelled a "writer-activist", Ms. Roy rejected the way the term splits writing and political engagement into two opposing roles. She said the idea reduces both – the writer is imagined as someone who must please, entertain, win prizes, while the activist is seen as someone who must constantly displease, fight, or perform outrage.

"When was it that we decided that writers in society do not write about the most burning and troubling things of our time?" she asked, questioning when writers became "people expected to sit apart from real conflict, like in a play school, playing with soft toys", shaping texts to suit markets and approval.

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This is to inform General Public that my client/s are intending to purchase the schedule property belonging to (i) Sri.Ashish Banerjee, Son of late Dr.A K Banerjee, Aged about 49 years and (ii) Smt.Elena Revinskaya, Wife of Sri.Ashish Banerjee, Aged about 49 years, both are residing at No:879, Seventh Cross, Third Block, Koramangala, Bangalore – 560 034;

Any, person, having any claim over the schedule property claiming through the predecessors in title or any other person, may lodge their objections or claims, in writing with all supporting documentary evidence by speed post with regard to such claim with the undersigned **within 10 (ten) days** hereof, failing which my client/s will proceed to conclude the Sale Transaction. Any claims lodged thereafter will not be entertained by my client/s;

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of entire property bearing Municipal No.879 (earlier site bearing BDA No.879), situated at Third Block, Koramangala, Bangalore, within the limits and administration of Bangalore South Nagara Palike, Bangalore, Corporation Ward No:151-Koramangala (old Ward No:68), PID No.68-2-879, EPID No.4225255587, together with structures standing thereon and bounded on the:

East by : Eighth Main Road;
West by : House bearing No.878;
North by : Seventh Cross Road;
South by : Private property;
MEASURING:
East to West : (21.10+28.80)/2 mtrs.;
North to South : (35.60+36.70)/2 mtrs.
In all admeasuring 901.94 sq.mtrs.;

N S RACHANA, N C JANARDHAN
Advocates
RACHANA LAW ASSOCIATES
"Lakshmideep", I Floor, No.2980, 17th Cross, Banashankari II Stage, Bangalore – 560 070
PH : 9731810810 / 9886284325
Dt:14-04-2026

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Hemant Shivam. M S/o H.S. Murudi R/at No.1/2, 9th Cross, 4th Main Road, Chamarajpet, Bengaluru-560018 do hereby solemnly state that I have changed my name from **HEMANT H M** (Old Name) to **HEMANT SHIVAM M** (New Name) vide affidavit dated 13.04.2026 sworn to Notary.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public are informed that our clients **Mr.Amol Anil Patil, son of Mr.Anil Jeroba Patil** and **Mrs.Rita Gera, daughter of Mr.Anand Prakash Gera** being the joint and absolute owners of all that piece and parcel of **Site No.90,** in the Layout known as **"AKSHAYA"**, comprised in **Sy.No.24/10,** totally measuring **2400 Sq. Ft.** along with roofed residential building measuring 2500 Sq.Ft. built-up area standing thereon, situated at **Seegehalli Village, Bidarahalli Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk,** affirm that the Sale Deed dated 25.09.2006 registered as Document No.20843/06-07 stored in CD No.BDHD73 of Book-I, before the Office of the Senior Sub-Registrar, Krishnarajapura, Bangalore has been lost/misplaced and have not been mortgaged/ pledged as collateral security and are not in a position to trace the said original document. The said clients have also lodged complaint on 08.04.2026 bearing **E-Lost Report No.2146760/2026** before the Bangalore City police about the aforesaid loss. Any person/s in possession of the aforesaid documents may return the same to us or anyone having any sort of claim over the said Property may lodge their objections in writing within **07 days** from this day to the undersigned.

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Advocates and Legal Consultants,
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Ph: 9945109229 / 9591067392.

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, RAJESHKUMAR Rajan Pillai, s/o; Rajan Pillai, r/o: C–1201, Alembic Urban Forest SY No.136, A.B. Vajapayee Road, Kadugodi, Blr, 560067. Have changed my name as Rajeshkumar Pillai.

New cell therapy shows promise to treat frailty among elderly

Frailty is not a single disease with a single cause: it arises from the effects of chronic inflammation, muscle loss, vascular ageing, immune dysfunction, and long-term stress. Because there is no single molecular target, most medical research has focused on managing the consequences of frailty, rather than reversing the condition

Biju Dharmapalan

In many Indian homes, ageing unfolds quietly. A grandfather who once walked to the local market now pauses every few steps. A grandmother takes days to recover from a minor fall. Such changes are often dismissed as "normal ageing". Medicine, however, increasingly recognises these signs as part of a condition called frailty, which is a state of accelerated biological ageing marked by lower endurance and slower recovery.

Frailty affects up to one in four people over the age of 50 worldwide. In India, where the population aged 60 and over is projected to rise to nearly 20% by 2050, the condition is likely widespread but rarely diagnosed. Unlike diseases such as diabetes or hypertension, frailty has no standard treatment protocol and is under-visible in policy.

A new international study suggests that this long-neglected condition may finally be biologically treatable.

Representative image. A new international study suggests that this long-neglected condition may finally be biologically treatable. YUE WU/UNSPLASH

THE GIST

Frailty affects up to one in four people over the age of 50 worldwide. In India, where the population aged 60 and over is projected to rise to nearly 20% by 2050, the condition is likely widespread but rarely diagnosed

Researchers studying elderly individuals with frailty found that a single infusion of mesenchymal stem cells significantly improved their physical endurance

The authors were careful to avoid overstating the findings, and have acknowledged that larger clinical trials and longer follow-up plans are required

Measurable gain

Researchers studying elderly individuals with frailty found that a single infusion of mesenchymal stem cells significantly improved their physical endurance. Participants aged 70 to 85 years who received the highest dose walked on average 60 m farther in a six-minute walk test nine months after treatment, which is a nearly 20% improvement over their baseline performance.

The study was part of phase IIb of the CRATUS trial and was conducted by a team that included researchers from U.S.-based biotechnology firm Longeveron. The firm's mesenchymal stem cell product is called Lomecel-B (or laromestrocel). The study's findings were published in the journal *Cell Stem Cell* on March 5.

For the first time, there seems to be a treatment that targets accelerated ageing itself.

Since frailty increases the risk of falls, hospitalisation, post-surgical complications, and premature death, even modest gains in endurance can be the difference between independent living and prolonged dependence.

Mesenchymal stem cells

Frailty is not a single disease with a single cause, rather it arises from the cumulative effects of chronic inflammation, muscle loss, vascular ageing, immune dysfunction, and long-term stress. Because there is no single molecular target, most medical research has focused on managing the consequences of frailty rather than reversing the condition itself.

The authors of the new study used mesenchymal stem cells, which are naturally found in bone marrow and fat tissue. These cells are biologically versatile as they can differentiate into bone, cartilage or muscle and, importantly, release molecules into the bloodstream that reduce inflammation and promote tissue repair.

An added advantage is that, unlike many cell therapies, mesenchymal stem cells do not strongly activate the recipient's immune system, thus reducing the need for immunosuppressive drugs. This is a critical safety consideration for older adults who are also frail.

The findings also confirm that while frailty has important social and psychological components, it is also a biological condition that could benefit from timely intervention. This said, how exactly laromestrocel works is unclear.

The findings confirm that while frailty has important social and psychological components, it is also a biological condition that could benefit from timely intervention

Researchers have expressed suspicion that the infused cells dampen inflammation in the tissues surrounding small blood vessels, which is a region increasingly implicated in ageing-related decline. Participants who received stem cells were found to have lower levels of a biomarker associated with inflammation in this vascular niche.

Ageing researchers are nonetheless also excited by the direction of change. Ageing-related decline is multifactorial and difficult to reverse, so seeing improvement rather than just stabilisation is encouraging. The study also reported no serious side effects. Yet the authors were careful to avoid overstating the findings, and have acknowledged that larger clinical trials and longer follow-up plans are required. Regulatory approval also remains uncertain as a phase III trial is pending and foreign regulators like India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) may require a bridging trial to prove the therapy also works as intended in Indian populations.

Implications for India

India's health system is still largely oriented towards acute illness rather than chronic ageing. Frailty is a strong predictor of hospitalisation and mortality but rarely features in clinical records or insurance claims.

India's flagship public health insurance scheme 'Ayushman Bharat' focuses on hospital-based secondary and tertiary care whereas preventive geriatric assessment, functional screening, and early interventions for ageing-related vulnerabilities receive little attention. Frailty is also not recognised as a reimbursable condition.

India also has a 'National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly' but its reach remains limited. Geriatric clinics are scarce in district hospitals and healthcare workers seldom use frailty assessment tools. Medical education also continues to treat the consequences of ageing as inevitable.

As a result, elderly patients enter hospitals already physiologically fragile and face higher risks after surgery or illness. Which means a therapy that improves resilience, even modestly, stands to significantly reduce the duration of hospital stays and risk of complications, and improve quality of life.

Role of ICMR

Stem-cell science in India also carries a complicated legacy. In the past, unregulated clinics have offered unproven "stem-cell cures" for a range of conditions, often exploiting vulnerable patients.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recognised this risk and issued strict guidelines that limited the use of stem cells to approved clinical trials. This caution is essential: even the new study, while promising, does not justify immediate clinical use.

ICMR-led studies could evaluate whether stem-cell-based interventions reduce falls, improve surgical recovery or enhance the quality of life among older Indians relative to existing options, to ensure that treatments such as using laromestrocel have both medically and socially relevant outcomes.

Both India and the world are entering an era in which the path to living longer is well-understood, even if governments and policies have applied it highly unevenly. The bigger challenge today is to ensure that those who live, in whatever circumstances, are able to do so with dignity and independence.

(Biju Dharmapalan is the Dean, Academic Affairs, at Garden City University, Bengaluru and an adjunct faculty member at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. bijudharmapalan@gmail.com)

BIG SHOT

The Prometheus monument dating back to construction of the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. An uncontrolled collapse of the internal radiation shell at the defunct nuclear power station in Ukraine could increase the risk of radioactivity release in the environment, Greenpeace warned on April 14, 2026. AFP

QUESTION CORNER

Measuring the universe

Q: What is the Hubble tension?

A: There is a major disagreement among physicists about how fast the universe is expanding. Astronomers use a value called the Hubble constant to measure it. However, the two main ways to calculate this number have produced different results.

In the first method, astronomers use the cosmic distance ladder. They observe nearby objects like pulsating stars and exploding supernovae to calculate how fast they are moving away from the earth. These measurements are said to be local, and they point to an expansion rate of around 73 km/s per second per megaparsec.

For the other method, scientists study the cosmic microwave background, which is the light left over from the Big Bang. Using mathematical models to project that ancient data into the present day, they have predicted a slower expansion rate of about 67 km/s per megaparsec.

The gap between these numbers is the tension. Both methods are highly precise yet their results don't match. The discrepancy suggests that physicists' current understanding of the universe might be incomplete.

The Hubble eXtreme Deep Field image taken in 2012. NASA

On April 10, astronomers narrowed down the local expansion of the universe to be 73.5 km/s per megaparsec. They also confirmed that the value was correct using multiple methods. This new work doesn't settle the debate — in fact, it goes to show how robust the data on both sides is.

Physicists are now investigating whether they have made a measurement error or if 'new physics', like a new property of dark energy, is driving the expansion.

For feedback and suggestions
for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

State begins linking emission data with VAHAN after out-of-State fines

Officials say that the linking process will apply to all Pollution Under Control Certificates issued from April 1, 2026, onwards

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Transport Department has initiated the integration of its Pollution Under Control Certificate (PUC/PUCC) records with the Centre's VAHAN (Parivahan) portal, following multiple complaints of vehicles registered in the State being penalised in other parts of the country due to missing emission data on the national database.

Officials said that the linking process will apply to all PUC Certificates issued from April 1, 2026, onwards. The move comes after several instances wherein Karnataka-registered vehicles were fined up to ₹10,000 in other States, as enforcement systems could not detect valid pollution certificates on the VAHAN platform.

The move follows instances of Karnataka-registered vehicles being fined in other States due to enforcement systems failing to detect valid pollution certificates on the VAHAN platform. FILE PHOTO

Explaining the limitation, a senior Transport Department official said, "Only PUC Certificates generated from April 1, 2026, can be integrated with the VAHAN database. Certificates issued before this date cannot be retroactively uploaded due to technical and system constraints. However, we are ensuring that all future records are seamlessly available across States."

The department has also begun the process of onboarding approximately 2,600 PUC centres across Karnataka onto the VAHAN system. This will be carried out in a phased manner to ensure smooth transition and minimal disruption. Officials added that a dedicated helpline has been set up to assist PUC centre operators during the integration process.

Commuters have welcomed the move, citing long-standing inconvenience. Rajesh Kumar, a resident of Koramangala, said that the lack of data sharing had caused unnecessary trouble during inter-State travel. He recalled being fined while driving through Odisha despite possessing a valid PUC Certificate issued in Karnataka. "The toll systems there automatically flagged my vehicle, and I had to later contest the challan by submitting proof. Because of such experiences, I started obtaining an additional PUC Certificate before travelling outside the State, even when my existing one was valid," he said.

He also pointed to irregular practices at some PUC centres in Bengaluru, alleging that higher-than-usual charges were being collected for longer validity certificates, unlike in other States.

Under the Indian Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, motorists found driving without a valid Pollution Under Control certificate are liable to pay a penalty of ₹10,000. Officials said that once the integration is fully implemented, such discrepancies and wrongful penalties faced by Karnataka vehicle owners in other States will be significantly reduced.

Row over temple in apartment complex heads to court

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A months-long dispute over the construction of a temple within a south Bengaluru apartment complex is set to come up for hearing on April 16, with residents still divided over the issue. The case, filed by four residents of SNN Raj Serenity in Yelenahalli, Begur, challenged the construction of a temple in a common area of the complex, alleging it was carried out without approvals or the consent of all residents. The court has directed that status quo be maintained at the site until the matter is heard on April 16.

What triggered the dispute is a structure near Block A. It has one wall holding up a roof, with a metal mesh and doors around it, and a Ganesha idol placed inside. While some residents have started using it for performing puja, others say it has been put up in a way that violates the rules.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Rahul Ramesh, a resident, said the issue dates back to November 2024, when an initial attempt was made to install a Ganesha idol in a common area near the entrance. That move was halted after objections were raised and the police were called, citing the absence of approvals. The idol was subsequently moved to a private residence. However, on March 20 this year, the same idol was installed again after a group led by the association's president and other office-bearers constructed the structure in the early hours, Mr. Ramesh alleged, adding that following this, residents approached the Begur Police Station, leading to the registration of a Non-Cognisable Report (NCR). A former representative of the SNN Raj Serenity Apartment Owners' Association said that general body meetings held in 2024 and 2025 had resolved that no place of worship should be constructed in common areas without obtaining mandatory clearances, including approvals and modifications to the master plan sanctioned by authorities such as the Greater Bengaluru Authority.

Meanwhile, those in favour of the temple maintain that the decision reflects the will of the majority. "A vote saw over 450 residents support the construction, while more than 200 opposed it," a resident, on the condition of anonymity, said.

Vivekanand Pandey, president of the association, refused to comment. When contacted, the vice-president of the association was also unavailable for comment.

Timings
BENGALURU

WEDNESDAY, APR. 15	
RISE 06:07	SET 18:32
RISE 04:15	SET 16:36
THURSDAY, APR. 16	
RISE 06:07	SET 18:32
RISE 04:56	SET 17:31
FRIDAY, APR. 17	
RISE 06:06	SET 18:32
RISE 05:39	SET 18:29

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	34	15
Mysuru	36	20
Bengaluru	34	24

Bengaluru Today
35°C The weather will be dry. Day will be warm with uneasy afternoon. Night will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
36°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be very warm and uneasy. Night also will be pleasant. Dry weather to occur.

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THE HINDU
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NIMHANS to hold consultative meeting

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

NIMHANS will host a national-level consultative meeting titled 'Digital technologies for Mental Health: Evolving Policy and Regulatory Recommendations for Safe Use' on April 17. The meeting is being convened by the NIMHANS-ICMR Centre for Advanced Research (CAR), in collaboration with the Services for Healthy Use of Technology (SHUT) Unit at NIMHANS. "The consultation comes at a critical moment, as mobile applications and technology-enabled mental health tools proliferate across the country, raising important questions around quality, privacy, safety, and responsible use," said a release.

Six mobile phones, SIM card seized in surprise inspection at central jail

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Despite heightened security, mobile phones continue to operate in the Parappana Agarahara Central Prison. Six mobile phones and a SIM card were seized during a surprise inspection conducted by prison officials on April 10.

A view of the Parappana Agarahara Central Prison. FILE PHOTO

Possible lapses

This is the latest in a series of raids, that that have always led to the discovery of mobile phones. Upset with this, officials are now probing possible lapses in the functioning of the jammers and the role of service providers. Further probe is under way.

"A service provider was found to have been increasing the signal strength on and off to provide better connectivity in the region, which seems to have been helping inmates in the prison access network. We have issued a notice to the service provider seeking an explanation and have warned of taking legal action," he said. The recent raid was carried out between 1.30 p.m. and 1.45 p.m. at Tower-1, 6th Barrack, Room No. 3. Items prohibited on the prison premises were found concealed within the barrack.

A complaint by Karna B. Kshatri, Superintendent (in charge), Central Prison, Parappana Agrahara, was filed on April 11 at the Parappana Agrahara Police Station, and a case has been registered under relevant provisions of the Karnataka Prisons (Amendment) Act, 2022.

Internal assistance

Preliminary findings suggest that the contraband may have been smuggled into the prison with internal assistance and used illegally by inmates.

Meanwhile, Alok Kumar, Director-General of Police (Prisons and Correctional Services), has initiated a probe against the inmates, but said action will also be taken against mobile service providers if they are found responsible for network access despite the presence of signal jammers.

CHANAKYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY
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Date : 13.04.2026
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THE HINDU
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WALK-IN INTERVIEW

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Railways to install automatic systems at level crossings

1,228 The Railway Board has directed zones to expedite installation of automatic closure systems at 1,228 level crossings to ensure trains get a green signal only when gates are shut for road traffic. The move follows safety concerns after a fatal 2025 accident and targets high traffic crossings across 16 zones. PTI

India's crude oil imports from Russia surge in March

5.3 In euro billion. India's crude oil imports from Russia more than tripled to 5.3 billion euros in March 2026, driven by higher volumes and rising global prices, according to a report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. Russian crude accounted for 91 per cent of India's total fossil fuel imports from Moscow during the month. PTI

Number of U.S., Filipino troops to join Balikatan exercises

17,000 More than 17,000 American and Filipino personnel will take part in the annual Balikatan combat exercises in the Philippines from April 20 to May 8, amid tensions in the South China Sea. The military drills will also involve forces from countries like Japan, France and Canada. PTI

Free dialysis provided for CKD patients in Haryana hospitals

1.89 in lakh. Government hospitals in Haryana has provided around 1.89 lakh free dialysis sessions to patients with chronic kidney disease in 2025-26, officials said. The State has also expanded its renal transplant programme, offering procedures and related care to patients free of cost to improve access to treatment. PTI

India's automobile wholesales hit record high in FY26

2.83 in crore. Automobile wholesales in India reached a record 2.83 crore units in FY26, marking a 10.4% year-on-year growth, according to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers. All segments, including passenger vehicles, two-wheelers and commercial vehicles, recorded their highest-ever annual sales. PTI

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What are the legal consequences of piracy?

The leak of Tamil movie *Jana Nayagan* before it could get a theatrical release could attract harsh penalties for the leakers if they are caught and chargesheeted, especially due to new amendments to the Cinematograph Act, 1952

EXPLAINER

Aroon Deep

The story so far:

In a blow to the movie's producers, Vijay-starrer *Jana Nayagan*, directed by H. Vinoth, was recently leaked online in its entirety in high quality while its theatrical release has been stuck in a limbo following issues with censor certificate.

The leak indicates that someone with legitimate access to the movie mishandled or intentionally spread it further. Six people have been held by authorities in connection with the leak. Film piracy through illegal downloads is rampant, but it is less common for content to become available in the first place in such high quality.

What are the laws on piracy? How well are they enforced?

The Copyright Act, 1957, deals extensively with infringement of intellectual property such as movies, TV shows, books, articles, and other creative work. Section 63 and Section 63A of the Copyright Act provide for fines of up to ₹2 lakh and three years of imprisonment. Repeat offenders can receive those same penalties again for each subsequent violation.

The Cinematograph Act, 1952, since its amendment in 2023, provides for a much larger fine: 5% of the audited gross budget of a film. While the minimum fine is decidedly smaller, judges may not look too kindly on the *Jana Nayagan* case in particular.

This is because unlike practically every other film, the Vijay starrer was leaked before it had a chance to release in theatres, denting both its theatrical value and home video rights valuation.

India is seen as a 'notorious market' owing to its anemic response to piracy cases. FILE PHOTO

It is uncommon for film piracy cases to be investigated and pursued with vigour. India is consistently listed as a "notorious market" by U.S. authorities, for instance, for anemic responses to piracy.

However, considering the vast spectrum of voices within the film industry and political circles that has come out in support of KVN Productions, which bankrolled *Jana Nayagan,* this case may be the subject of a more serious investigation.

Judges have tended to focus more on distributors in piracy and intellectual rights cases than on individual infringers. But depending on an individual infringer's behaviour, punishments can end up hitting not just the original leaker of the film, but anyone who shares a link forward.

To boot, Tamil Nadu Police's State Cyber Crime Wing said in a press release that those among the six arrested were sharing cloud storage links to the film.

How did this movie get leaked? How do studios protect against leaks?

Ordinarily, movies are only leaked to pirates in high quality when they appear on OTT streaming platforms. This is because once this happens, in spite of copy-resistant technologies employed by these platforms, pirates have found ways to defeat Digital Rights Management (DRM) protections on such content, and extract a video file that is close to the original stream in quality and fidelity.

As such, withholding content access from audiences at large altogether is the current gold standard. If only theatre projectionists have the movie – and that too only in an encrypted hard drive – it is much harder to copy. Invisible and barely visible watermarking enables studios to instantly identify the perpetrator if a copy is made from a legitimate theatrical print. That makes leaking an incredibly unattractive prospect to people with access to a movie.

It is common for full videos in a film's supply chain to be visibly watermarked for the intended recipient, or to indicate a versioning. There is such a watermark for *Jana Nayagan*, but it is not yet clear if the version circulating online has enough forensic clues for investigators to zero in on a specific individual. If carelessness was involved, the harshest punishments may go to the first few people who received and distributed the film.

What happens if a movie has already been leaked?

It is incredibly challenging for a leaked film to be completely wiped from the Internet. For one, there are several sites, constantly changing their domain names to evade judicial website blocking orders. For another, private groups on messaging apps like Telegram and protocols like torrents, make the distribution of pirated content harder to stem.

However, there still remains an industry of so-called "anti-piracy" firms like AiPlex who work with filmmakers, sports broadcasters, and so on, to quickly send copyright takedown notices to social media platforms (who generally act quickly on such alerts), and torrent sites (some of whom accept and act on it).

It is also common for filmmakers to approach courts for so-called "dynamic injunctions" that allow them to constantly provide High Courts with links to non-compliant sites' URLs, after which they are blocked online. Some "John Doe" orders can be passed even before a film is leaked, in anticipation of a film becoming available on such platforms were a leak to happen.

THE GIST

- It is incredibly challenging for a leaked movie to be completely wiped from the Internet
- Section 63 and Section 63A of the Copyright Act, 1957, provide for fines of up to ₹2 lakh and three years of imprisonment for infringement of intellectual property
- The Cinematograph Act, 1952, since its amendment in 2023, provides for a much larger fine: 5% of the audited gross budget of a film
- In the *Jana Nayagan* case, the leak coming before its theatrical release has dented both its theatrical value and home video rights valuation

Balancing faith and ecology: are rivers taking the brunt?

It is observed by experts that ritual offerings accelerate microbial activity in rivers, adding to pollution loads

Saee Pande

Story so far:

A 21-day religious ceremony at the Pataleshwar Mahadev Temple in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district, guided by Sant Shivanand Maharaj, culminated in a controversial ritual where 11,000 litres of milk were poured into the Narmada River in what devotees described as a "sacred offering" on April 8.

Organisers aimed at purifying the river and bless Narmada Parikrama pilgrims. The incident, where a tanker was seen pouring milk, sparked a debate between religious faith and environmental concerns regarding pollution.

No official action has been taken yet by the Madhya Pradesh pollution control board or National Green Tribunal. Malnutrition in Madhya Pradesh has prompted the ₹700-crore Yashoda Milk Supply Scheme (2026-27), targeting 1.3 crore children through schools and Anganwadis.

Experts and activists argue that the 11,000 litres poured into Narmada could provide 44,000 glasses (250ml each), feeding 2,200 kids daily for 20 days or supplementing 10,000+ for a week at school programmes.

What are the impacts of ritual offerings on aquatic ecosystems?

Though culturally viewed as pure, environmental studies show dairy effluents can have biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) levels far exceeding domestic sewage, leading to rapid depletion of dissolved oxygen and ecological stress in aquatic environments.

It is observed by experts that ritual offerings further accelerate microbial activity, adding to cumulative pollution loads. This reduces dissolved oxygen, suffocating aquatic life, while nutrient enrichment can trigger algal blooms, further degrading water quality and disrupting biodiversity.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)'s 2025 assessment identified 296 polluted river stretches across 271 rivers, with water quality at over 800 locations exceeding safe limits for bathing (BOD > 3 mg/l). The CPCB also observed that the Yamuna in Delhi records BOD levels as high as 83 mg/l, nearly 27 times the safe limit, effectively rendering stretches ecologically "dead."

A monitoring committee appointed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2018 observed an "unacceptable rise" in pollution levels in the Yamuna after idol immersion, noting sharp increases in heavy metals from paints and synthetic materials.

Empirical evidence from CPCB monitoring and peer-reviewed studies shows that events like Kumbh Mela, Chhath Puja, Durga Puja, and Ganesh Utsav raise BOD and solid waste levels. Rapid population growth has pushed river degradation to the forefront of public concern, intensifying pressures on already fragile ecosystems.

Traditions that evolved in an era of sparse populations are now practiced at a vastly larger scale, amplifying their ecological impact. In the context, it is worth asking if age-old practises need to be revisited and reimagined to ensure that devotion does not come at the cost of the very rivers it seeks to honour?

What does India's environmental laws entail?

At the apex level, the Supreme Court of India has reviewed cases involving the weakening of environmental safeguards for religious practices. Petitions rely on three legal foundations: The precautionary principle, the Water Act (Prevention and Control of Pollution), 1974, and Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees a clean environment.

Together, these establish that environmental protection is a binding legal obligation, even when balanced against religious freedoms. The NGT has enforced the CPCB's 2020 idol immersion guidelines, mandating artificial tanks or regulated zones for immersions. However, experts observe that no single law explicitly regulates offerings such as milk, flowers, oil, or mass bathing as a distinct category. Indian constitutional jurisprudence is clear that religious freedom under Article 25 is not absolute and can be restricted on grounds of public health. Yet, enforcement remains uneven due to political sensitivities and lack of uniform guidelines on everyday ritual practices. The NGT has applied principles such as "polluter pays" and precaution, reinforcing that faith cannot override ecological limits.

Is a per capita limit on offerings plausible and effective ?

Even minimal practices create a significant, continuous pollution load, say experts.

An analyses of offerings at Varanasi ghats with an average daily footfall of 2.5 lakh, shows minimal offerings of 5 ml milk, 5 ml oil(for lamps), and one flower per person, translating into 1,250 litres each of milk and oil, and 5 tonnes of flowers daily, excluding ashes, public offerings, and other waste. On peak days, this rises to 3,500 litres and 14 tonnes of waste.' It is argued that per capita limits alone are insufficient. Effective regulation must combine site-specific caps, waste collection, and diversion to ensure sustainable river management.

The debate is not about curbing faith, but about recognising ecological limits.

THE GIST

- Empirical evidence from CPCB monitoring and peer-reviewed studies shows that events like Kumbh Mela, Chhath Puja, Durga Puja, and Ganesh Utsav raise BOD and solid waste levels
- Even minimal practices create a significant, continuous pollution load, say experts
- Rapid population growth has pushed river degradation to the forefront of public concern, intensifying pressures on already fragile ecosystems

Delimitation cannot be an excuse for domination

GUEST COLUMN

Siddaramaiah

With the special session of Parliament starting April 16, the Union government is expected to take up the women's reservation Bill, alongside moving ahead with the delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats. These are two distinct issues – one concerning representation for women, and the other reshaping political representation across States.

The advancement of women's reservation is a welcome step – one that the Indian National Congress has consistently championed for decades.

Given the significance of this reform, any attempt to link it with an unscientific and unilateral exercise of redrawing representation raises serious concerns. Women's reservation can be implemented within the current delimitation itself; it need not be made contingent on a fresh exercise.

South India's reaction

Unsurprisingly, the proposed delimitation has triggered strong reactions in South India – and sensing the political heat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has now chosen to speak, offering what he calls "reassurance" to southern States that they will not lose out, as seat increases will be proportionate (50%) across States. But the reassurance, especially when timed with political calculations in poll-bound States, raises more questions than it answers.

Let us be clear: the issue has never been about whether the number of Lok Sabha seats should increase. It is about how they increase, and more importantly, who benefits. Delimitation is not a routine administrative exercise. It is a redistribution of political power, and in Parliament, numbers are not symbolic; they are decisive.

And the numbers tell a clear story.

Under the proposed expansion, a few large States - where the BJP currently holds significant political influence - stand to gain disproportionately. Uttar Pradesh jumps from 80 to 120 seats (+40), Maharashtra from 48 to 72 (+24), Bihar from 40 to 60 (+20), with Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat also seeing substantial increases. Altogether, these States gain around 128 to 131 additional seats.

In contrast, southern States see modest increases. Karnataka goes from 28 to 42 (+14), Tamil Nadu from 39 to 58-59 (+20), Andhra Pradesh from 25 to 37-38 (+12-13), Telangana from 17 to 25-26 (+8-9), and Kerala from 20 to 30 (+10). Together, they gain only 63 to 66 seats - nearly half as much.

Changes ahead: During the special session of Parliament starting April 16, the Centre is expected to take up the women's reservation Bill, alongside moving ahead with the delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats. FILE PHOTO

Relative voice

Even where percentage increases appear similar, the reality lies in absolute numbers. Today, Uttar Pradesh has 52 more seats than Karnataka. With delimitation, that gap could widen to nearly 78. Maharashtra's lead over Karnataka would expand from 20 to around 30 seats. Remember: In Parliament, numerical strength determines influence, not percentage share. As this imbalance grows, Karnataka's relative voice in national decision-making is diminished.

Despite a significant expansion, the South's share in the Lok Sabha remains stuck at around 24%. This is already a limited share for a region that contributes significantly to the national economy. But this so-called stability hides a deeper imbalance. As total seats increase while the share remains unchanged, the gap widens and the relative influence of southern States weakens. This means a party can win power by winning a few large States, even if it is weak elsewhere.

What does State gain?

So the question must be asked: what exactly is Karnataka – and the South as a whole – gaining from this exercise?

This proposal cannot be viewed in isolation. Over the past few years, several decisions have strained the federal balance, particularly affecting southern States. Karnataka, in particular, has faced reduced tax devolution, delays in GST compensation, withholding of crucial allocations, and unfair distribution of Central resources.

Taken together, this points to a clear pattern of disadvantaging States that do not align politically with the Centre – States where the BJP has struggled to win the trust of the people. When electoral acceptance is limited, structural changes to representation cannot become a backdoor method to compensate.

That is a deeply worrying direction for any representative democracy.

There is also a fundamental issue of fairness. States that invested in population stabilisation, governance, and economic growth now find themselves at a disadvantage. A system that does not recognise responsible governance risks sending exactly the wrong message - that better performance leads to reduced political weight.

Karnataka example

Karnataka stands as a clear example. It is a major contributor to India's economic growth, a leader in innovation, and a State that has shown relatively stable population growth. Yet, under this approach, its relative voice risks being diluted. Weakening Karnataka's role in national decision-making is not just unfair – it is short-sighted.

Equally concerning is the process. A structural change of this magnitude cannot be pushed through without serious deliberation. It musst be discussed openly in Parliament and with States. Federalism is not sustained by unilateral decisions – as has been the hallmark of 12 years of Modi rule – it survives on trust, consultation, and balance.

If numerical strength alone begins to determine power, the need for broad-based support across the country will diminish. That is a dangerous shift.

Delimitation must not become a tool that reshapes representation to suit political convenience, or one that is pushed through by tying it to unrelated reforms. It must remain a process that protects balance, respects diversity, and strengthens trust in the Union. After all, the Constitution - given to us by Babasaheb Ambedkar - envisions India as a Union of States.

(The author is the Chief Minister of Karnataka)

Govt. removes Chief Minister's political secretary Naseer Ahmed

This follows charges of anti-party activities ahead of the Davangere South Assembly seat bypoll; although the high command is believed to have asked him to step down voluntarily, he declined

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Following alleged anti-party activities in the run-up to the Davangere South Assembly seat bypoll, the Karnataka government has issued a notification removing Naseer Ahmed, MLC, as political secretary to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

Dept. order

Although the party high command is believed to have asked Mr. Ahmed to step down voluntarily, he declined to do so. Subsequently, on Monday, the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms issued an order relieving him of his responsibilities.

Amid allegations of anti-party activities by some Congress leaders from the minority community in the run-up to the April 9 bypoll, KPCC Minority Cell chairperson Abdul Jabbar resigned on April 11. The Chief Minister had indicated that Mr. Ahmed's resignation was imminent.

Naseer Ahmed

What went wrong

Mr. Ahmed, along with Housing and Minorities Affairs Minister B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan and Mr. Jabbar, has been accused of lobbying for a Muslim candidate in Davangere South. After being denied the ticket, they allegedly stayed away from the campaign and are believed to have supported rival candidates, including those from the SDPI.

The trio reportedly opposed the candidature of Congress nominee Samarth Mallikarjun, son of Horticulture Minister S.S. Mallikarjun.

Mr. Jabbar, a three-time MLC, too was an aspirant for the ticket, with backing from Mr. Zameer Ahmed Khan.

Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar is believed to have urged the party high command to take action against leaders accused of anti-party activities. Some legislators from the minority community have alleged a conspiracy to defeat the Congress candidate in the bypoll.

Action against Mr. Ahmed and Mr. Jabbar follows a report submitted by AICC representatives on recent developments within the party.

In June 6, 2025, K. Govindaraju, MLC, was removed as political secretary to the Chief Minister following his alleged role in the IPL 2025 victory celebrations of Royal Challengers Bengaluru, which led to a stampede that claimed 11 lives on June 4, 2025.

'Excessive appeasement'

Meanwhile, ridiculing the Congress over the situation that paved the way for relieving Mr. Ahmed from the post, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok has blamed it on the alleged "excessive appeasement of minorities".

In a social media post, Mr. Ashok said he had warned the Congress of this in 2024, while referring to the alleged pro-Pakistan slogans raised by supporters of Rajya Sabha member Nasir Hussain.

Cautioning the Congress that Muslims would support it only till they find an alternative, he said the Congress in Karnataka would have to face tough situation like its organisations in Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Bihar if they did not change their approach.

'MLAs will not return without discussing Cabinet reshuffle'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Despite a warning from KPCC president and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, a group of Congress MLAs has decided not to return to Karnataka without meeting AICC general secretaries K.C. Venugopal (organisational matters) and Randeep Singh Surjewala, who is in charge of Karnataka. The legislators intend to press their demand for a Cabinet reshuffle.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi, senior Congress MLA Ashok Pattan said they had travelled to the national capital after obtaining permission from both Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar.

On Tuesday, after offering tributes to B.R. Ambedkar on his birth anniversary at Karnataka Bhavan, the legislators indicated that more MLAs were likely to join them. They are expected to meet Mr. Venugopal and Mr. Surjewala on Wednesday. They would not return to Bengaluru without meeting them, Mr. Pattan said.

Some MLAs met AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge, who, according to a senior legislator, listened patiently to their grievances.

Mr. Shivakumar has expressed displeasure over the visit of the MLAs to New Delhi. He said the timing was not appropriate – particularly with the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections approaching – and urged party members to maintain discipline.

Major surgery

Meanwhile, former Minister Tanveer Sait has said that the State is set for a "major surgery" of the Cabinet after May 4.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru on Tuesday, Mr. Sait said preparations to reconstitute the ministry had already been made but were deferred due to the byelections.

Prime Minister to visit Adichunchanagiri Mutt

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Narendra Modi

Everything is set for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mandya district on Wednesday. He is visiting the district to inaugurate the Sri Guruvbhyravaikya Mandira, which is a memorial dedicated to the late seer of Adichunchanagiri Mutt Balagangadharanatha Swami, on the mutt premises in Nagamangala taluk of Mandya district.

The Prime Minister, who will be arriving at the HAL airport in Bengaluru, will reach the mutt by a helicopter. After inaugurating the memorial, the Prime Minister will also address a public gathering.

Elaborate security arrangements have been put in place in and around the mutt premises. The arrangements were reviewed by mutt seer Nirmalanandanatha Swami and Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok.

The programme will be attended by former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, Union Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy, who also represents Mandya in Lok Sabha, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, Mandya district in-charge Minister N. Cheluvarayaswamy.

Addressing a press conference in Bengaluru, Mr. Kumaraswamy described the Wednesday's programme will see participation from leaders across parties.

Education powerful tool to break out of all shackles: CM

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Stating that education was a powerful tool to break out of all shackles, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said that it was impossible to create an egalitarian society without an education that encompassed a rational, scientific and humanitarian approach.

"If B.R. Ambedkar was not educated and if he did not have the fighting spirit, we would not have got the Constitution. And I have become the Chief Minister thanks to the Constitution given by Ambedkar," the Chief Minister said, during Ambedkar's birth anniversary celebrations here.

While the Constitution provides freedom, equality and brotherhood, the Chief Minister lamented that it has not been possible so far to achieve total equality.

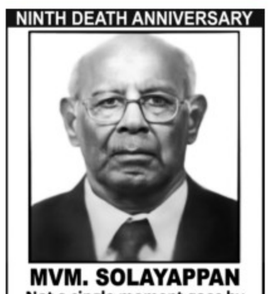
At a function organised at the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee office, Mr. Siddaramaiah said that even after 76 years of implementing the Constitution, inequality exists.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and other leaders during the birth anniversary celebrations of B.R. Ambedkar at the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Tuesday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

NINTH DEATH ANNIVERSARY



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E-tender No./ RFx No. :- 7000039395 - 2nd call
Name of work: - "2nd call for Augmentation by providing additional 1x50MVA, 220/22kV T/F along with 6 x 22kV GIS bays, 1 x 220kV AIS bay, 1 x 22kV GIS Bus Coupler bay, 1 x 22kV GIS PT bay with extension of 220kV Main Bus, Auxilliary Bus and allied civil works at 220kV Airoli Knowledge Park (AKP) S/s under EHV O&M Dn., Bhandup in Vashi Zone.(Transformer will be supplied by MSETCL)"
Estimated Cost :- Rs. 16,87,99,467/- Excluding GST. Rs.19,91,83,371/- Including GST . **Tender Fees:-** Rs. 25000/-+ GST. **Date for Sale and Submission of the e-Tender Documents:** From 15.04.2026 @ 15.00 Hrs. to 29.04.2026 @ 15.30 Hrs.
For detailed information visit our website: **https://srmetender.mahatransco.in**
Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER,
EHV PC (O&M) Zone, Vashi

KARNATAKA CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' FEDERATION LIMITED
KMF Complex, Dr. M.H. Marigowda Road, DRC Post, Bengaluru-560 029.
Tel: 080-25536625 / 25536789 fax: 080-25536105 E-mail: kmfengg@gmail.com
IFT No: KMF/ENGG/ Contract Demand-M-Dairy/02295/2026-27 Date: 13.4.2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

[Two cover System] [Through KPP Portal only]

Karnataka Milk Federation Ltd; Bangalore invites Short Term tender from the eligible Electrical Contractors through KPP Portal for the works mentioned in the table below. The interested manufacturers /Suppliers who have handled similar kind of works may participate in the tender as indicated below, by logging on to website **https://www.kppp.karantaka.gov.in** and also contact Help desk **E-mail; hphelpdesk.blr@intarvo.com and helpline no. 080-25501227/ 25501216.**

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Qty.	EMD (Rs.)	Period of Completion
1	Extension of Contract Demand from 2600KVA to 3200 KVA & Related works at Mother Dairy, Yelahanka.	1 Job	50,000/-	3 months

1. Tender schedules may be downloaded from dated: **15.04.2026 to 22.04.2026 upto 4.00 PM. 2.** Last date for Tender submission on date: **22.04.2026 upto 4.00 PM. 3.** Tender [Part 1] to be opened on date: **23.04.2026 at 4:30 PM.**
Hence forth changes / modification in the tender, It will be uploaded on KPPP portal only.
For Karnataka Milk Federation Limited
Sd/- Director [Engineering-2]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

An undated photo of Subhas Chandra Bose with his Indian National Army. Bose is seen in uniform in front row with Captain G. S. Dhillon (left) and others. HINDU ARCHIVES

Subhas Chandra Bose: the paradox of a revolutionary's theory and praxis

Bose's legacy is a synthesis of contradictions: a mystic who embraced science, a democrat who did not shy away from authoritarianism, a patriot who looked toward unified humanity; his egalitarian ideal remains a powerful counter-narrative to fissiparous tendencies in an independent India

Prathmesh Kher

The final part of this two-part series examines the intellectual journey of Subhas Chandra Bose from absolute idealism to a dialectic conception of reality and its influence on his political doctrine and his revolutionary praxis

IV. Equality in action: policies and praxis

Bose treated India as a vast laboratory for Samyavada, applying "secular and scientific training" to dismantle caste, communalism, and the stagnation of gender roles.

As early as his 1931 Karachi address to the All-India Naujawan Bharat Sabha, he outlined a seven-point programme that included the "abolition of the caste system and the eradication of social and religious superstitions" and the "organisation of peasants, workers, and women on a socialistic programme."

His most significant military-social reform was the abolition of "class" (caste/ethnic) companies, which had been the bedrock of British recruitment.

In a 1943 speech to the INA Officers' Training School, he said: "The British have tried to divide us into 'martial' and 'non-martial' races. They have kept us in separate water-tight compartments–Sikhs with Sikhs, Pathans with Pathans... In the Azad Hind Fauj, there are no such divisions. We are all Indians... a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Sikh must feel that they are brothers-in-arms."

At the Padang, Singapore (9 July 1943), Bose stated, "Remember that when you stand on the battlefield, the bullet does not ask whether you are a Hindu or a Muslim. Why then should you ask it of your brother?"

His Proclamation of the Provisional Government (21 October 1943) "guarantees religious liberty, as well as equal rights and equal opportunities to its citizens... and declares its firm resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation equally and transcending all the differences cunningly fostered by an alien Government in the past."

The praxis of equality was visible in daily soldier life. Bose used a Hindustani adaptation of *Jana Gana Mana* as the INA's anthem, translated by Abid Hasan 'Safrani'. Likewise, while respecting 'Bande Mataram' which communal Muslims had raised objections to, Bose popularised the use of 'Jai Hind' instead. Bose's views on women were also ahead of his time. Addressing Singapore Radio (13 July 1943), he said, "There is no sphere of public activity... in which Indian women have not gladly and bravely shared, along with our men, the burden of our national struggle... Our brave sisters have also played a prominent part in the secret revolutionary movement."

On 22 October 1943, he said while inaugurating the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, "We want not one Rani of Jhansi, but thousands and thousands of Ranis of Jhansi. It is not the number of rifles you may carry... equally important is the moral effect of your brave example."

At the All-India Trade Union Congress (4 July 1931), Bose championed the worker's right to a living wage, "Just as every worker can claim the right to work, he can also claim the right to a living wage... Is it not a fact that in some areas at least the poor workers are still subjected to conditions which have much in common with the old institution of slavery?" He positioned his socialism explicitly between Moscow-aligned Communism and timid reformism, stating, "Between these two groups is another group which stands for socialism–for full-blooded socialism–but which desires that India should evolve her own form of socialism as well as her own methods. To this group I humbly claim to belong."

The ultimate proof of his ideas was seen in the Red Fort prisoners. As journalist Shiva Rao reported in 1945, "Hindus and Moslems had to eat the same food cooked by the same people and no questions were asked."

V. Dealing with the devil: pragmatism in the heart of darkness

Bose's alliance with the Axis powers remains his most controversial chapter. His collaboration was not born of ideological alignment with Fascism, but of a cold 'enemy of my enemy' pragmatism. Bose admired Japan but morally refused to give it a pass on China. In his 1937 article *Japan's Role in the Far East*, he wrote, "Japan has shattered the white man's prestige... but could not all this have been achieved without Imperialism, without dismembering the Chinese Republic, without humiliating another proud, cultured and ancient race? No, with all our admiration for Japan... our whole heart goes to China in her hour of trial. China must still live-for her own sake and for humanity. Out of the ashes of this conflict she will once again rise phoenix-like as she has so often done in the past."

Bose was a vocal critic of the Third Reich. In 1936, writing to Dr. Thierfelder, he wrote, "The new racial philosophy which has a very weak scientific foundation stands for the glorification of the white races in general and the German race in particular. Herr Hitler has talked of the destiny of white races to rule over the rest of the world. But the historical fact is that up till now the Asiatics have dominated Europe more than have the Europeans dominated Asia. I am saying this not because I stand for the domination of one people by another, but simply because I want to point out that it is historically false to say that Europe and Asia should not be at peace with one another."

He saw through Hitler's desire to "curry favour with Great Britain" at India's expense and was unambiguous in his response. "When we are fighting the greatest Empire in the world for our freedom... we cannot brook any insult from any other nation."

By 1942, Bose framed his choices as a matter of survival. Speaking from Berlin (1 May 1942), he dismissed the charge of being an "enemy agent" and positioned the war as a struggle between the status quo and those determined to tear it apart, "I am not an apologist of the three Powers and it is not my task to defend what they have done or may do in future... My concern, however, is with India; and it is my duty as a patriotic Indian to find out and tell my countrymen the policy of the different Powers with regard to India."

For Bose, the world war was a struggle between the status quo represented by the Anglo-American powers and those determined to "tear that old rag into pieces". He viewed Allied talk of "liberty and democracy" as rank hypocrisy, given the "brutal cruelty" and "cultural degeneration" inflicted upon one-fifth of the human race in India.

VI. The higher synthesis

For Bose, India's liberation was not an end but a prerequisite for a global "higher synthesis", a bridge between the material advancements of the West and the spiritual insights of the East.

He placed this burden on youth, "The youths of today will be the nation and the leaders of tomorrow... their responsibility for making this new order a success devolves, in the last analysis, on the youths of this country." He also challenged the cynical view that nations cannot act morally: "If it is possible for one individual to be unselfish, to live one's life at a high moral level, I see no reason why an entire nation cannot also rise to that level."

As the military situation in Southeast Asia collapsed in 1945, his faith in the dialectic held. His final Special Order of the Day (15 August 1945), Bose said, "Do not be depressed at our temporary failure. Be of good cheer and keep up your spirits. Above all, never for a moment falter in your faith in India's destiny. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long. Jai Hind."

In *The Indian Struggle*, he outlined what a free India could offer humanity, "In religion and philosophy, in architecture, in painting, dancing and music and in other arts and handicrafts, India could offer something unique to the world."

Conclusion: the eternal rebel

Bose's legacy is a synthesis of contradictions: a mystic who embraced science, a democrat who did not shy away from authoritarianism, a patriot who looked toward unified humanity.

The Provisional Government of Azad Hind collapsed with Japan's defeat. But the egalitarian ideal Bose embodied in the INA remained a powerful counter-narrative to fissiparous tendencies in an independent India. The principle of scientific planning he championed shaped India's development. And his great wager, that a free India could contribute a "higher synthesis" to world civilisation, remains a challenge each generation must answer anew.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Leonardo da Vinci was born on April 15, 1452. Here is a quiz on the artist

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Sindhu Nagaraj

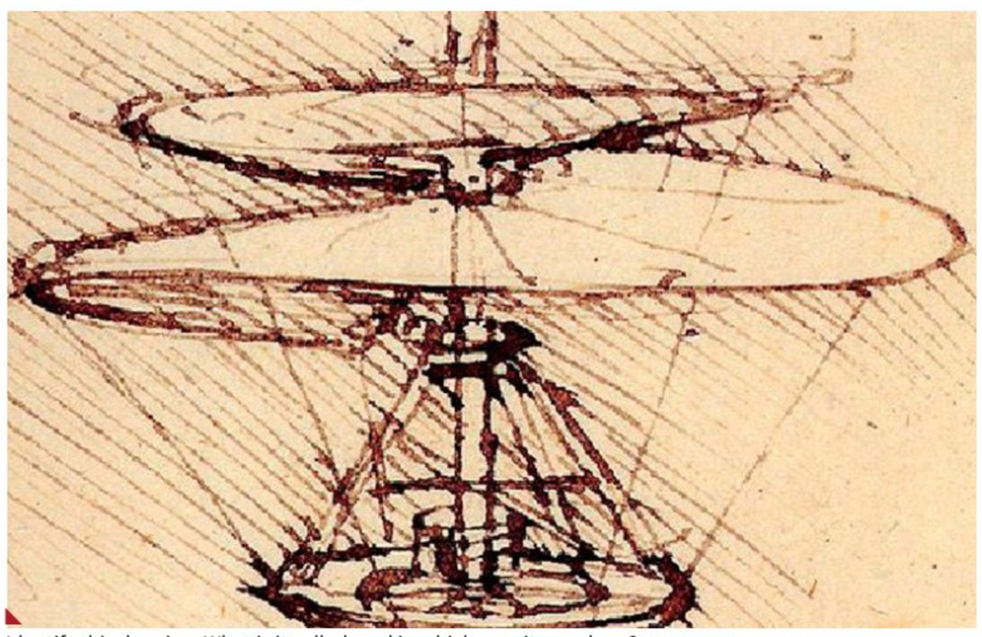
QUESTION 1
Leonardo epitomised which worldview?

QUESTION 2
Which is his famous work which is regarded as the world's most famous individual painting?

QUESTION 3
This painting depicts a nude man in two overlapping standing positions, inscribed within a circle and a square. Name the painting.

QUESTION 4
Leonardo collaborated with which artist on his The Baptism of Christ?

QUESTION 5
The Museo Ideale Leonardo da Vinci is located in which city in Italy?



Identify this drawing. What is it called, and in which year it was done? FILE PHOTO

Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:
1. Name of Gagarin's spacecraft and the word meaning he uttered: **Vostok 1 and** *Poyekhali*
2. Alexei Leonov's achievement: **First human spacewalk**
3. Record for the longest uninterrupted spaceflight: **Valeri Polyakov**
4. What is the 'Karman Line': **Boundary separating the earth's atmosphere from outer space**
5. Record for most spaceflights: **Seven**
6. The Chinese-build spacestation: **Tiangong-1**

Visual: The IAF officer who was backup for Rakesh Sharma: **Ravish Malhotra**

Early Birds
Tamal Biswas – Sudhir Thapa – Suchit Narottam- Prodosh Mitra – Prem Nath Tiwari

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

What is the difference between "update" and "up-to-date"?

"Up-to-date" means latest. When you have up-to-date information or news about something, it means that you have the latest information or news, about it.

If you want to know what's happening in the stock market, ask Narender. He is up-to-date.

Bala gave us an up-to-date account of what was happening in the Assembly.

When you talk about up-to-date gadgets or clothes, you are referring to the newest or latest developments and trends. In this case, you are not making something old, modern. You are buying something that is brand new. Here are a few examples:

Even though she had all the up-to-date appliances, she wasn't very happy.

Up-to-date is an adjective and it can also be written without the hyphens: up to date.

The word "update" can be used as a noun and a verb. When used as a noun, the stress is on the first syllable (UPdate) and when used as a verb, the stress is on the second syllable (upDATE). When you "update" something, you try to modernise something that you already have. You are not buying anything new. For example, you might find that the techniques that your company uses for making shoes are rather old fashioned. You may wish to modernise them. When you do this, you are "updating" your production techniques.

The security measures are updated every month.

The Air Force has asked the Russians to update its fleet.

.Rahul spends a lot of time updating the information on his website.

When you update information, you try and bring information up-to-date

Is it O.K to say "tomorrow week", "tomorrow month"?

"Tomorrow week" is a very common expression, but I haven't heard anyone say "tomorrow month" or "tomorrow year". When you tell someone on a Tuesday that you will meet him "today week", it means that you will meet him "next Tuesday". Similarly, when you say, I'll meet you "tomorrow week", what it implies is that you will meet him next Wednesday – a week from tomorrow.

Another common way of saying the same thing is "I'll meet you Wednesday week".

What is the origin and meaning of D-Day? June 6, 1944 is generally known as D-Day. That was the day when the Allied forces landed in Normandy, France and started beating back the Germans. This wasn't the first time that the term D-Day was being used. The term, I believe, was first used during the First World War, for the Allied offensive at Saint-Michael. By the way, do you know what the "D" stands for in D-Day? Believe it or not it stands for 'day'. So what you are actually saying when you say "D-Day" is "Day Day"! Nowadays, the term "D-Day" is used to refer to any day on which an important activity or action is going to take place.

Word of the day

Gambit: A clever action intended to achieve an advantage and usually involves taking a risk

Synonyms: ploy, stratagem

Pronunciation: newsth.live/gambit

Usage: The agreement to hold a referendum was a political gambit

International phonetic alphabet: /gæmbɪt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

INBRIEF

SC Collegium proposes judges for Kerala and Karnataka HCs

The Supreme Court Collegium on Tuesday recommended the appointments of new judges in Kerala and Karnataka High Courts, with a majority of nominees being women advocates and judicial officers. The Collegium proposed Preeta Aravindan Krishnamma and Liz Mathew Anthraper as judges of the Kerala High Court. It has recommended Rajeshwari Narayana Hegde, Kedambadi Ganesh Shanthi and Mahadevappa Brungesh to the Karnataka High Court Bench.

Kerala HC to hear petition on dermatologist-dentist dispute

The Kerala High Court will soon take up a writ petition on a dispute between dermatologists and dentists over who is authorised to conduct hair transplantation and cosmetic surgeries. The issue began after the Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists, and Leprologists issued a public statement in 2025, flagging its concerns on quackery. Dental surgeons opposed the reference against members of its community who practise cosmetology and dermatology.

48-year-old realtor shot dead in Vijayapura

An unidentified man killed a 48-year-old realtor in Vijayapura on Tuesday. Realtor Raju Bapu Kare was engaged in real estate business and grape farming.

He was a resident of Godandaddi village. The accused came in a tipper vehicle, intentionally rammed the deceased's four-wheeler and opened fire at him resulting in the latter's death inside the vehicle. Investigation is on. A murder case has been registered.

HC raps sub-registrars over failure to honour binding decrees of courts

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum made these observations while allowing two writ petitions over sub-registrars' failure to implement civil court and Bombay High Court directions

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Taking serious note of sub-registrars refusing to update records despite binding court orders in two cases, the High Court of Karnataka (HCK) reminded registration authorities that they cannot sit in appeal over judicial decisions or demand separate directions when litigants produce certified copies of passed court decrees, and cautioned that such conduct amounts to defiance of law and judicial mandates.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum made these observations while allowing two separate writ petitions over sub-registrars' failure to honour directions of a civil court in Bengaluru to cancel registered General Power of Attorney (GPA) and Joint Development Agreement (JDA), and to fail to cancel sale deed of certain properties related to insolvency proceedings despite directions given by the Bombay High Court (BHC).

Case background

In the first petition, the court quashed an endorsement issued by the Mahadevapura sub-registrar, who had refused to record the cancellation of the JDA and GPA despite the petitioner, Antony Samy K., a 68-year-old property owner, producing a certified copy of a decree from a Bengaluru Commercial Court declaring the documents terminated. The sub-registrar had insisted that the civil court must directly communicate the decree. Justice Magadum observed that the function of the sub-registrar is purely ministerial and that such refusal forces litigants to file unnecessary writ petitions, thereby flooding the constitutional courts with avoidable litigation.

The HCK issued guidelines directing all civil courts across Karnataka to send decree copies cancelling registered property documents to the sub-registrars within four weeks. The HCK made it clear that the sub-registrar cannot reject certified decree copies merely due to the absence of direct communication from the courts under Section 31(2) of the Specific Relief Act, 1963, for the cancellation of an instrument registered under the Indian Registration Act, 1908.

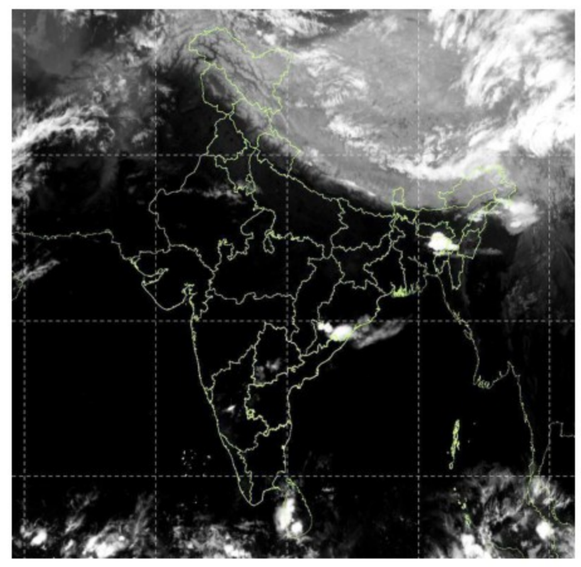
While hearing another petition, Justice Magadum ruled that Karnataka's sub-registrars are constitutionally bound to implement orders passed by other High Courts while noticing that several sub-registrars in Bengaluru city had failed to act as per the direction of the BHC, which had declared as null and void the registration of sale deeds during pendency of an insolvency proceedings related to a Bengaluru-based company.

"Once a High Court validly exercises jurisdiction and issues directions, such directions bind all authorities to whom they are addressed, irrespective of their physical location, provided the subject matter or its effect falls within their domain,"

Justice Magadum said while imposing a cost of ₹25,000 on registration authorities terming their inaction of not implementing BHC's directions as amounting to "wilful disobedience" of a judicial order.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning & gusty winds(40-50kmph) very likely at isolated places over Assam & Meghalaya, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal & Sikkim. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning & gusty winds(30-40kmph) very likely at isolated places over Interior Karnataka.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	015.0	33.8	21.4	Kozhikode	—	36.0	27.9
Ahmedabad	—	41.4	27.0	Kurnool	—	42.5	29.7
Aizawl	—	33.0	18.0	Lucknow	—	38.1	19.8
Allahabad	—	40.4	20.0	Madurai	—	39.0	26.1
Bengaluru	—	36.6	24.2	Mangaluru	—	34.3	26.4
Bhopal	—	39.6	22.6	Mumbai	—	34.6	25.5
Bhubaneswar	—	—	—	Mysuru	—	37.2	21.2
Chandigarh	—	35.3	15.4	New Delhi	—	38.1	17.6
Chennai	—	34.0	26.3	Patna	—	37.7	23.1
Coimbatore	—	38.8	25.2	Port Blair	—	32.1	25.7
Dehradun	—	32.8	13.9	Puducherry	—	34.9	25.9
Gangtok	—	15.0	13.2	Pune	—	39.9	20.0
Goa	—	34.0	25.9	Raipur	—	41.2	26.9
Guwahati	—	31.4	19.6	Ranchi	—	35.2	18.0
Hubballi	—	00.0	00.0	Shillong	—	—	—
Hyderabad	—	40.5	28.4	Shimla	—	25.4	13.0
Imphal	—	30.2	18.1	Srinagar	—	24.8	6.8
Jaipur	—	38.8	23.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	36.2	27.7
Kochi	—	33.0	28.2	Tiruchi	—	38.1	26.0
Kohima	—	22.9	13.1	Vijayawada	—	38.1	26.0
Kolkata	—	38.0	26.0	Visakhapatnam	—	33.1	27.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.16	.33	12	65	122	
Bengaluru	8	—	20	72	101	
Chennai	2	12	—	13	43	
Delhi	.29	.32	14	95	146	
Hyderabad	2	7	27	79	101	
Kolkata	6	17	43	38	78	
Lucknow	.16	.48	62	188	110	
Mumbai	1	.25	36	94	148	
Pune	—	.32	32	61	94	
Visakhapatnam	.54	.61	39	61	126	

Yesterday

High levels of particulate matter pollution recorded in most cities across the country. Going by Central Pollution Control Board data, Lucknow the worst with PM2.5 pollution levels touching a dangerous 369. Kolkata was a close second with PM10 readings of 352.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Admonished boy cycles 100 km to Nandyal, found in Raichur

The Hindu Bureau
KADAPA

In a fit of rage, a schoolboy from Proddatur town bicycled all the way to Nandyal, located 100 km away.

According to Proddatur Circle Inspector Konda Reddy, the boy was admonished by his father for quarrelling over petty issues with his younger brother. When he tried to sell his bicycle at a retail outlet, the shop owner sought his personal details, forcing the boy to abandon the cycle at Nandyal railway station and board a train to Raichur.

He was later traced in Raichur and reunited with the family.

Paediatrician quits IAP citing no support after legal notice

Siddharth Kumar Singh
HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based paediatrician Sivaranjani Santosh has resigned from the Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), citing a lack of institutional support after she received a legal notice from pharmaceutical companies over her public remarks questioning certain oral rehydration products (ORS).

Dr. Santosh, who had criticised the marketing and positioning of products such as ORSL and its rebranded version ERZL, said her decision to step down followed the Academy's failure to stand by her.

Notice and statements

The controversy centres on a legal notice sent to her by companies including Kenvue and Johnson & Johnson, which accused her of making false, misleading, disparaging and defamatory statements about their products.

Dr. Santosh has maintained that her comments were aimed at raising awareness about the indiscriminate use of electrolyte drinks in children, particularly their routine use as daily hydration products.

She alleged that the IAP neither condemned the legal notice nor publicly supported her despite her representations.

Instead, she said, the academy issued a position statement on oral rehydration solutions, a move she questioned. "Why release a statement on ORS now, when it has been in use for decades?" she asked.

Last catch

Ahead ban: Fishermen return to shore with their boats ahead of the fishing ban coming into force from Wednesday, at Kothapatnam beach near Ongole, Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday evening. KOMMURI SRINIVAS

Kerala Chief Minister condemns dental college student's death

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Public sentiment is galvanising against the management of the Anjarakandy Dental College following the suspected suicide of medical student Nithin Raj, with his family attributing his death to entrenched casteism on the campus.

In a Facebook post on Ambedkar Jayanti on Tuesday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan termed the death "extremely painful". He said progressive Kerala would never "forgive those who drove Nithin Raj to his death".

Mr. Vijayan said the Union government had turned a deaf ear to the demand to enact the Rohith Vemula (Prevention of Discrimination, Exclusion or Injustice) (Right to Education and Dignity) Bill.

Mohanan Kunnumal, Vice-Chancellor of the Kerala University, called on Nithin's parents at their house in Thiruvananthapuram. Speaking to reporters, Mr. Kunnumal said strong action, including possible cancellation of affiliation, was under way against the college. "I have given an interim report to Governor, who is the Chancellor of State universities," he said.

'Bid to derail probe'

Nithin's family accused "certain vested interests" of attempting to mislead the investigation by stating that Nithin had "ended his life" due to threats from agents of a predatory loan app from which he had borrowed significant sums of money. Nithin's sister, Nikhita, said her brother had, like hundreds of ordinary people, borrowed money (an estimated ₹18,000) to meet life's exigencies. "Nithin Raj availed the loan with the family's concurrence for covering our mother's hospitalisation expenses. He had not defaulted on any instalment but had sought time till his examinations were over to make a partial payment," she said.

The Kannur police are investigating whether Nithin was a victim of a loan app scam that targeted citizens with quick, easy, high-interest loans with zero collateral and used strong-arm tactics, including cyber harassment and blackmail, to recover the debt.

A Kerala exporter's ordeal highlights depth of West Asian crisis

Dhinesh Kallungal
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

As tensions escalate over the U.S.'s blockade of maritime traffic to and from Iran's ports, along with Iran's counter-threat to shut down ports of its West Asian neighbours, the story of an exporter who shipped a container load of watermelon and muskmelon from Kerala to Jebel Ali in the UAE via a port in Maharashtra on the eve of the West Asian war highlights the depth of the crisis faced by the export-import community, both within and outside the country.

Shaiju K., export manager at City Fresh, Thiruvananthapuram, loaded a 40-foot reefer container with watermelon and muskmelon from Nhava Sheva port in Maharashtra to Jebel Ali on February 26. The shipping agent, Sri Sri Navigation Shipping, provided a timeline indicating departure by February 28 and expected arrival at Jebel Ali on March 2. He paid a shipping charge of ₹2.32 lakh to transport the consignment, which was valued at ₹8.5 lakh and comprised perishable cargo.

Left with no options

A day after the goods were loaded onto the vessel, the war began, and the exporter had no information about the consignment until March 10. Later, the agent informed him that the cargo would be offloaded at Sohar Port in Oman instead of Jebel Ali due to the escalating conflict. With no other option, the exporter consented. However, the agent subsequently informed him that the container would instead be transported to Jebel Ali on March 11.

However, nothing materialised, and the agent issued an additional bill of ₹14,000 towards shipping charges. In addition, the exporter was asked to pay a war-risk surcharge of $4,000 and a mandatory 5% surcharge amounting to $1,000. "I was not in a position to pay these charges, as the total value of the commodity was less than the war-risk surcharge and other shipping costs. So, I requested them to release the cargo without the extra bills, as there was no certainty regarding the quality of the perishable goods," said Mr. Shaiju.

Tainted goods: The consignment shipped from Kerala found to be damaged after a delay in reaching UAE. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

However, the request was denied, and he had to pay ₹6.89 lakh to clear the cargo. The ordeal did not end there as the goods were found to be completely rotten upon offloading. The exporter had to pay an additional ₹2 lakh to the local municipal authorities to dispose of the rotten melon. "In short, I had to bear a liability of around ₹22 lakh-₹23 lakh for reasons beyond my control," Mr. Shaiju added.

Air cargo

According to K. Suresh Kumar, chairman of the Air Cargo Agents Association of India (ACAAI), the lack of certainty in timely delivery of goods shipped by sea has led exporters to turn to air cargo, where freight charges have increased two to threefold.

Moreover, exporters often pay advances to various parties well before such crises. In such situations, they are left with the choice of either forfeiting the advance or taking the risk of proceeding with shipments to sustain their business.

Increase in price

However, air cargo offers relatively better prospects, as consignments reach their destinations with minimal delay, albeit at significantly higher costs.

The price of transporting 1 kg of cargo to Europe has risen from ₹170 to ₹340, while rates for various West Asian destinations have increased from ₹60 to around ₹150 per kg, according to K. Suresh Kumar, chairman of the ACAAI.

Kerala typically exports around 600 tonnes of perishable cargo daily destinations across the globe. This has now dropped to less than 400 tonnes a day, Mr. Kumar said.

Munshid Ali, secretary of the Kerala Exporters' Forum, said it was high time for the Union government to establish a statutory freight regulatory authority to curb illegal practices in the sector and protect the export-import community from the adverse effects of global geopolitical developments.

Reservation ruse

Women's empowerment is an excuse to undermine federal equity

In a Parliament sitting convened from April 16, the Union government is seeking to advance women's empowerment, but as part of a wider legislative package: the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, and a companion Delimitation Bill. The stated rationale is the operationalisation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (the 106th Amendment of 2023), which reserves one-third of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats for women but was tied to a post-Census delimitation. The government's insistence on bundling women's reservation with delimitation suggests that the former is being used as political cover for the latter: a sweeping reallocation of Lok Sabha seats that would reshape the federal composition of Parliament to the advantage of States where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) enjoys electoral dominance, and at the expense of States where it has been historically weak.

When India's decennial Census was delayed for more than five years without a definitive or rational explanation from the BJP-led Union government, the political logic was not hard to discern. The 2021 Census was first postponed citing COVID-19, but no reason was offered for the successive deferrals that followed, until it was quietly announced that the exercise would be carried out in 2026-27. Under the Constitution, the freeze on inter-State distribution of Lok Sabha seats, pegged to the 1971 Census, was set to expire only after the first Census conducted after the year 2026 was published. This meant that in the normal course, delimitation would have been based on the 2031 Census. By delaying the Census to 2026-27, the government ensured that the delimitation exercise could be initiated on its preferred timeline, using the 2026-27 Census rather than one conducted in 2031.

Now, perhaps realising that any delimitation exercise would itself take years to conclude after the 2026-27 Census, and therefore not be ready even for the 2029 Lok Sabha elections, the government appears to be in a tearing hurry to proceed with delimitation on the basis of the last completed Census, that of 2011. The 131st Amendment Bill amends Articles 55, 81, 82, 170, 330, 332, and 334A of the Constitution. Its most consequential changes are the following. First, it raises the ceiling on Lok Sabha membership from 530 elected members from States and 20 from Union Territories to 815 and 35 respectively, to a potential House of 850. Second, it replaces the existing constitutional definition of "population", which specifies the 1971 Census for seat allocation and the 2001 Census for boundary demarcation, with an open-ended formulation: population shall mean the Census "as Parliament may by law determine." The choice of which Census to use is no longer left to the Constitution but will depend on ordinary legislation, changeable by simple majority. Third, it deletes the third proviso to Articles 82 and 170 entirely. A freeze on seat allocation that has been in place since the 42nd Amendment of 1976, and extended by the 84th Amendment of 2001, guaranteed States that had stabilised their populations that they would not lose parliamentary seats as a consequence. This safeguard is now removed.

Members of the Union Cabinet, including Home Minister Amit Shah and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, had assured the country that the existing proportion of seats held by each State will be maintained through a uniform increase. But this assurance finds no place in the constitutional amendment. Article 81(2)(a), retained unchanged, mandates that the ratio between seats and population shall be the same for all States "so far as practicable" which is a population-proportionality requirement and does not preserve existing proportions.

Based on 2011 Census data, a purely population-proportional allocation to an 850-seat House would produce sharply unequal increases across regions. The Hindi-heartland States (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Delhi), which currently hold 207 of 543 seats, would secure 366 – a 77% increase, with their share rising from 38.1% to 43.1%. The southern States (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, and Puducherry), with 132 seats now, would receive only 176, a 33% increase, while their share would drop from 24.3% to 20.7%. The eastern States would slip from 14.4% to 13.7%; the North-East from 4.4% to 3.8%. The west and the northern non-Hindi States would remain roughly unchanged. States that spent decades building their health infrastructure, educational access, and women's agency that brought fertility down now face a reduction in their share of democratic power, while States that lagged on these indicators stand to gain the most seats. The already weakened fiscal federalism would now be compounded by diminished political representation for socio-economically advanced States.

That this legislation is being rushed through, with barely any time for public debate, just days before voters in two crucial States go to the polls, makes the timing even more suspect. There is no reason why women's reservation cannot be implemented within the existing 543-seat Lok Sabha by designating constituencies for women on a rotational basis, an approach the Opposition had pressed for after the passage of the 106th Amendment. MPs from States that stand to lose proportional representation in the Lok Sabha must resist the bulldozing of legislation on an issue that strikes at the federal foundations of the Indian Union. The consequences of letting this amendment pass are too grave to contemplate.

The alarming rise of medicalisation in India

Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya

is a practising cardiometabolic physician, an internationally certified metabolic health coach, and a health policy expert

The recent announcement by Air India, hinting at possible pay cuts or even de-rostering for crew members with a higher Body Mass Index (BMI), may, at first glance, appear to be a prudent and well-intentioned step toward ensuring fitness and operational safety. Aviation, after all, is a profession where physical readiness is essential. Yet, the timing of this decision –coinciding with the week an anti-obesity drug, semaglutide, went off patent and nearly 40 products entered the Indian market– signals something deeper.

India today faces a mounting burden of obesity and associated metabolic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, fatty liver disease, and dyslipidaemia. Nearly a quarter of Indians are overweight or obese. One in 10 adults live with diabetes, one in three with hypertension, and a substantial proportion has fatty liver disease. Even more concerning is the rapid rise of obesity among children. The causes, which are neither obscure nor debated, include the proliferation of ultra-processed or high fat, salt and sugar-content foods, and increasingly sedentary lifestyles shaped by urban work patterns, shrinking open spaces, chronic stress, alcohol consumption, and inadequate sleep. Compounding this is a genetic predisposition among Indians and South Asians toward excess body fat despite a seemingly lean appearance – the so-called "thin-fat" phenotype.

Historically, in a society long shaped by undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, excess weight was once perceived as a marker of prosperity. Consequently, as overweight and obesity began rising over the past two decades, public discourse remained muted, almost reluctant to confront this emerging reality.

Then came the pharmaceutical response. Around this time last year, another anti-obesity drug, tirzepatide, entered the Indian market and rapidly became one of its highest-selling medications. Its commercial success revealed not just clinical demand but also the emergence of a vast and lucrative therapeutic marketplace. With semaglutide now available at a remarkably lower cost, the market potential has expanded further.

Sustained marketing campaign

Over the past year, however, a more troubling pattern has emerged. Prescription medicines cannot be directly advertised to the public, yet pharmaceutical companies have grown adept at navigating these constraints. Surrogate advertising – often framed as public awareness campaigns – has become increasingly sophisticated. In the past year, the country witnessed full page newspaper campaigns, and billboards at major urban areas regarding obesity; influencer endorsements for medical products; and sponsored features that resemble independent journalism, subtly shape public perception without explicitly naming the drugs.

> One of the most fundamental drivers of the obesity epidemic — the expansion of ultra-processed foods —receives comparatively limited attention

Regulatory responses lagged behind. The restrain from the government on newspaper ads and billboards came only a year later.

The messaging on drugs from pharmaceuticals is rarely overt; instead, it is nuanced, persistent, and highly effective, gradually reshaping both public expectations and clinical practice. In such an environment, the boundary between genuine scientific advancement and commercial enthusiasm begins to blur. New drugs are presented as transformative breakthroughs, while their uncertainties receive far less attention.

The less talked about side effects

Anti-obesity medications, particularly those acting on GLP-1 pathways, are associated not only with fat loss but also with a reduction in lean muscle mass – a condition known as sarcopenia. As there is loss of fat from the body, nearly 25% to 40% is contributed by the loss of muscle mass – an unintended but serious consequence. By suppressing appetite and reducing caloric intake, these drugs can inadvertently lead to muscle loss unless accompanied by adequate protein intake and structured physical activity, especially resistance training. Sarcopenia in this context is no longer a theoretical concern. It has been documented in clinical trials and is supported by emerging real-world evidence. Yet, amid the celebration of weight loss outcomes, such risks are often understated. Individuals may achieve a lower BMI while compromising strength, metabolic resilience, and long-term health.

The trajectory does not end there. Sarcopenia itself is now emerging as a new therapeutic target. Pharmaceutical pipelines already include drugs aimed at preventing or reversing muscle loss, many in advanced stages of development. It requires little imagination to foresee the next phase – a population using anti-obesity medicines, along with additional therapies to manage the very consequences these drugs produce. What we are witnessing here is a cascading logic: one intervention begets another, each addressing the unintended consequences of the previous one. It is a self-reinforcing cycle sustained by scientific innovation, commercial incentives, and a growing societal preference for quick pharmacological solutions over sustained behavioural change.

Perhaps what is most disquieting is the evolving role of professional medical bodies within this ecosystem both globally, and increasingly in India. Clinical guidelines are being updated with growing frequency, sometimes annually, often generating anticipation around new therapies. The interval between a drug's introduction and its inclusion in standard treatment protocols appears to be shrinking. Inclusion in such guidelines almost guarantees widespread adoption and commercial success. While scientific progress must be embraced, the pace of endorsement raises important questions: are these recommendations grounded in robust, long-term evidence, or are they shaped by the forces influencing markets and public discourse?

Meanwhile, one of the most fundamental drivers of the obesity epidemic – the rapid expansion of ultra-processed foods –receives comparatively limited attention. In India, this sector has grown at an annual rate of around 13% between 2011 and 2021. These products, aggressively marketed and widely accessible, shape dietary habits from an early age, fuelling the very conditions the pharmaceutical industry seeks to treat. Yet policy responses remain hesitant. Front-of-package warning labels, for instance, continue to face delays.

Thus, we inhabit a deeply paradoxical ecosystem. One industry promotes consumption patterns that drive metabolic disease. Another offers pharmaceutical remedies. A third emerges to treat the side effects of those remedies. From a market perspective, this system is efficient, profitable, and self-sustaining. From a public health perspective, it is profoundly misaligned with the goal of durable well-being.

Shift in perspective

Reclaiming the narrative of health demands a shift in perspective. Medicines must be recognised as adjuncts, and not substitutes, for foundational interventions such as a nourishing diet, increased physical activity, sufficient and restorative sleep, and stress management. Greater transparency about the risks of newer therapies is not just desirable but absolutely essential. At the same time, there must be stronger, evidence-based advocacy to restore lifestyle modification to the centre of clinical care. The medical profession must, above all, reaffirm its ethical compass.

Encouraging fitness among airline crew is not misguided. But if such measures become yet another entry point into a cycle of measurement, medication, and market-driven dependence, we risk losing sight of what health truly means. Anti-obesity drugs are not the destination; they are a signal revealing how deeply medicalisation is embedding itself into everyday life. This is a moment to pause, recalibrate, and reclaim health before medicine begins to define it.

Mapping the legislative vacuum in India's heat crisis

Bhoomika Choudhury

Independent researcher and adviser on business and human rights, migration and labour rights

The phenomenon of extreme heat in India has undergone a profound geographic and demographic shift, transitioning from a seasonal hardship to a systemic national crisis. Once confined largely to the arid northwest and central plains, heatwaves now regularly penetrate humid coastal corridors and traditionally temperate regions. The last two years recorded unprecedented temperatures, with over 57% of Indian districts now classified as heat-prone. However, while the thermal canopy covers the entire subcontinent, its impact is sharply divided by class, caste, and gender. For the affluent, heat is an inconvenience managed through private cooling; for the nearly 400-490 million informal workers, it is a systemic violation of the right to life and a driver of "thermal injustice."

Unlike those with private infrastructure, construction workers, street vendors, and delivery partners possess zero "cooling autonomy." For these individuals, as studies consistently demonstrate, even a small rise in temperature causes a significant drop in productivity and a corresponding loss of income. These workers are routinely forced to choose between their biological survival and their economic survival.

Evidence from the frontlines

Recent evidence from the frontlines has yielded harrowing testimonies of harm that underscore this inequality. Sanitation workers and waste pickers report that extreme ambient heat, combined with toxic fumes from unsegregated waste, creates hazardous micro-climates where temperatures can be up to 5% higher than in surrounding areas. Some workers have reported suffering severe physical burns on their hands and legs due to handling heated waste materials without protective gear. This 'climate-caste nexus' ensures that those in the most dehumanising roles are also the most exposed to lethal heat, yet they remain largely excluded from existing adaptation strategies.

> The government should launch suitable provisions for financial compensation to cover the loss of income incurred when heat extremes prevent work

These vulnerabilities are seen across sectors. Gig delivery partners operate under "algorithmic pressure" where time-sensitive penalties discourage rest even during red-alert periods. Construction workers face high metabolic heat generated by physical exertion, compounded by the heat from steel and concrete. Street vendors face the double blow of health deterioration and a drop in daily income as goods perish and customers retreat.

A profound legal and fiscal vacuum exacerbates this crisis. The Factories Act, 1948 protects only those in indoor "workrooms," while the new Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHWC) Code 2020 essentially erases outdoor heat. Although Section 23 of the Code allows the government to notify standards for weather, it does not mandate them, vesting the Centre with discretionary authority and no minimum safety floor.

And fiscally, since heatwaves are not currently on the Nationally Notified Disaster list, States are restricted by the '10% trap', where they can only utilise a small fraction of their State Disaster Response Fund for relief efforts.

However, from a worker's perspective, the issue remains one of occupational safety rather than just disaster management.

Addressing 'thermal injustice'

A comprehensive framework for legislative and executive action is required to bridge these gaps and transition from discretionary advisories to enforceable rights. This must begin with the formal acceptance of the 16th Finance Commission's recommendation to include heatwaves and lightning in the Notified National Disaster list for the 2026-31 period. Such a move would unlock the National Disaster Response Fund, bypass current spending restrictions, and convert early warnings from simple advisories into binding mandates for district administrations. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Labour and the India Meteorological Department must transition to the Heat Index, a metric combining temperature and relative humidity to reflect true human feel, as the primary legal trigger for declaring heatwaves. This is essential to ensure that coastal areas, which face the lethal combination of heat and humidity, are not at a disadvantage in national safety protocols.

Furthermore, the government must exercise its powers under Section 23 of the OSHWC Code to notify binding heat safety rules, including protected work-rest cycles, and the provision of specialised Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as insulated flasks, as a non-negotiable employer obligation. Based on the Supreme Court's *Ranjitsinh* (2024) ruling, the 'Right to Cool' must be recognised as a fundamental right under Article 21, necessitating that Urban Local Bodies establish suitable cooling shelters and free public water kiosks.

Specialised binding directives are needed for high-hazard occupations, such as sanitation and underground mining, to mitigate risks from toxic exposure. For the gig economy, digital platforms should be legally prohibited from imposing delivery time penalties during heat alerts, ensuring a statutory thermal safety net for workers currently excluded due to their 'contractor' status. Finally, the government should launch suitable provisions for financial compensation to cover the loss of income incurred when heat extremes prevent work. Innovative models, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association parametric heat insurance scheme, provide a viable blueprint for this transition. Heat governance must be reimagined as a core component of the social contract where thermal safety is a non-negotiable mandate of constitutional justice.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On the right to vote

The Supreme Court's remark to the Election Commission that voting is a "sentimental right" is a timely reminder of its true essence. Voting is not just a procedural formality; it embodies citizens' faith, dignity, and voice in a democracy. Any attempt to dilute its value — through restrictive measures, lack of transparency, or administrative lapses — risks eroding public trust. The Election Commission must treat this right with the seriousness it deserves by ensuring absolute fairness, accessibility, and accountability in the electoral process. Protecting the sanctity of voting is not optional; it is imperative for sustaining a healthy and inclusive democracy.

Nagarajamani M.V.
Telangana

Remembering Ambedkar

The SIR which was supposed to be a credible exercise in electoral hygiene is now turning out into a facade. On Ambedkar Jayanti, it is pertinent to note that the Father of our Constitution strongly advocated for universal adult franchise, viewing the right to vote as essential to democratic equality.

Biju C. Mathew
Thiruvananthapuram

Thumping victory

Hungary's recent verdict offers a lesson that resonates far beyond its borders. After sixteen years of uninterrupted rule — marked by constitutional changes that favoured those in power and a steady weakening of institutional checks — voters chose to bring about a decisive shift. The scale of this outcome itself underlines the resilience of democratic will. It also highlights a broader pattern: populist politics has its limits. Appeals to nationalism and the creation of perceived enemies may work for a time, but they lose force when everyday concerns such as economic slowdown and falling living standards begin to dominate public thinking. The Hungarian experience reinforces a core democratic truth: no matter how entrenched a government may seem, it is never beyond the reach of an electorate to demand accountability and change.

A. Myilsami
Coimbatore

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Food worth ₹1.55 lakh cr. wasted annually

A.S. Mittal
Vice-Chairman, Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board

Each year, on March 30, the world marks the International Day of Zero Waste. This year, the theme is food waste, which is not only timely but also an emergency call for global attention to one of the most painful contradictions of our time: mountains of food going waste even as millions go to bed hungry and malnutrition prevails across the globe.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Food Waste Index Report 2024 finds that the world wasted 1.05 billion tonnes of food – inadequate post-harvest storage capacities and households accounting for 60% of it, food services 28%, and retail 12%. Beyond individual behaviour, the scale of food loss reflects systemic inefficiencies embedded in supply chains, policy failures, and consumption cultures that have normalised discarding food as an acceptable cost of abundance.

Yet, abundance is far from universal; around 783 million people still face hunger, and more than 3.1 billion are unable to afford a healthy diet. The coexistence of a billion tonnes of wasted food and a billion hungry stomachs is not an irony; it is an indictment of inefficiency and apathy.

India's position in the global picture is both consequential and deeply uncomfortable. According to the UNEP report, India ranks second globally in food waste, with 78-80 million tonnes of post-harvest crop and food worth ₹1.55 lakh crore wasted annually, following China, which wastes an estimated 108 million tonnes of food per year. At the same time, the U.S. wastes 24.7 million tonnes annually. Japan, which is long celebrated for its culture of 'mottainai' – a deep-rooted ethic of zero waste, wastes merely 5.2 million tonnes of food annually.

The per capita picture is equally revealing. Per capita household food waste in India stands at 55 kg annually, lower than 73 kg in the U.S. and 75 kg in Germany. The country ranks 111th out of 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index and around 194 million of its people do not get enough food. Food waste is not a statistic; it is stolen meals from millions of mouths.

> The coexistence of a billion tonnes of wasted food and a billion hungry stomachs is not an irony; it is an indictment for inefficiency and apathy

Punjab is a State that produces enough to feed hundreds of millions but then watches a significant portion of that go to waste before it reaches plates. Food loss and waste in the State is a significant issue, driven by extreme weather events and alarming levels of inefficiencies in storage and logistics. With over 8,200 tonnes of foodgrains getting spoiled in Food Corporation of India storage facilities alone in the State between 2019 and 2024, it is the highest in India.

According to a NITI Aayog report, post-harvest handling inefficiencies – inadequate covered storage facilities, under-investment in cold-chain infrastructure and timely mechanisation support, and the lack of grading, standardisation, and scientific packaging – are major bottlenecks in Punjab.

Food waste is not merely a human tragedy; it is an ecological one. Food loss and waste account for 8-10% of global annual greenhouse gas emissions. If food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases after China and the U.S. Decomposing food in landfills releases methane, which has a warming potential many times more than that of CO_2.

Every morsel wasted means lost water, land, fuel, and hard work of farmers. Producing one kilogram of rice requires about 5,000 litres of water. When that rice is thrown away, the water is lost too, more so for a State like Punjab which faces groundwater depletion. In this context, integrating food loss and waste into national climate plans is urgent.

Ending food waste demands a reconfiguration of systems, incentives, and values, with human dignity at their centre. The following are five credible and sustainable ways in that direction:

Build the cold chain, break the loss chain: India processes only around 8% of its produce compared to 65% of the U.S. and 23% of China. A national cold-chain mission, particularly in States such as Punjab, Haryana, and U.P., must be treated as food security infrastructure, not an optional investment.

Legislate against waste, legislate for sharing: Several European nations have made it illegal for supermarkets to destroy unsold edible food, mandating its donation to food banks instead. India needs a law to redistribute surplus food, backed by tax incentives for businesses and institutions that donate.

Empower the farmer at the first mile: Post-harvest loss begins at the farm gate. Farmer-producer organisations must be equipped with mechanised drying, hermetic storage bags, and mobile cold units. The Jute Packaging Materials Act, which requires grain storage in porous jute sacks, needs to be urgently reviewed to allow modern hermetic solutions.

Make waste visible, make saving rewarding: India currently has no consolidated national database tracking food waste at the retail and hospitality level. Mandatory food waste measurement and public reporting, modelled on the UNEP's Food Waste Index methodology, should be introduced for large food businesses, wedding caterers, and institutional kitchens.

Revive the ethic of treating 'Anna (food)' as sacred: Every culture on this subcontinent has, in its own way, treated food as something to be revered – *Anna Brahma*, food is god. It is the most sustainable food philosophy ever devised. Schools, communities, and public institutions must rekindle this ethic, not as religious instruction but as civic responsibility.

Let's move from awareness to collective action and make food waste reduction a shared national priority.

A promising hate speech Bill, with gaps

The Assembly select committee should redraft it to evolve into a balanced law

STATE OF PLAY

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Over 100 days ago, at a pre-Christmas celebration, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy announced plans to introduce legislation on hate speech to punish those who insult other religions. Keeping his word, the Chief Minister ensured that the Telangana Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2026 was introduced in the Assembly on March 30, 2026. While the intent of the government was to ensure respect for all faiths and strictly deal with attempts to disrupt communal harmony, the Bill's operative portions sparked intense debate.

Drawing flak from political parties as well as religious minority groups, the government referred the Bill to a select committee. In simple terms, the Bill defines hate speech broadly as any expression – spoken, written, or digital – intended to cause "disharmony" or "ill-will" based on religion, caste, gender, or sexual orientation. It includes stringent provisions, such as imprisonment ranging from one to seven years for first-time offenders and up to 10 years for repeat offenders. Curiously, the Bill classifies these offences as cognizable and non-bailable, effectively allowing the police to arrest individuals without a warrant.

It also empowers a "Designated Officer" to block or remove digital content from social media platforms without a prior court order or hearing – a move critics have termed "digital authoritarianism."

Political parties critical of the government flayed the Bill for allowing arrests without

bail and for creating a censorship mechanism which, they argue, operates without judicial supervision.

BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao described it as a draconian tool that could be misused against citizens and political opponents, while BJP floor leader A. Maheshwar Reddy termed it a "death warrant" for freedom of speech. AIMIM legislator Ahmed Bin Balala argued that propagation of religion should not be treated as hate speech, noting that existing laws already cover such offences. CPI MLA Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao said the Bill was an attack on democracy, reminiscent of colonial-era laws.

But, Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, who introduced the Bill in the Assembly, defended it, describing it as a safeguard for vulnerable groups rather than a curb on free speech. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy also rejected allegations of political vendetta. He argued that existing legislation cannot match the speed and scale of online hate speech and insisted that a comprehensive new framework is essential to maintain public order and protect marginalised communities.

Civil society organisations, however, offered a more nuanced assessment. Civil Rights Initiative Internationale (CRII), a Hyderabad-based NGO focused on protecting civil rights, has documented over 42 incidents of targeted violence and discrimination across Telangana, raising concerns about constitutional freedoms and minority rights. Dr. K. Babu Rao, former Additional Director General of Police and national president of CRII, highlighted physical assaults, vandalism, and inflammatory rhetoric against minority communities, pointing to systemic exclusion and discriminatory practices.

Goneh Solomon Raj, general secretary of the Telangana United Christians and Pastors Association (TUCPA), which represents churches across 594 mandals, reported that six Christian places of worship were attacked in January this year alone.

Mazher Hussain, founder and executive director of Confederation of Voluntary Associations (COVA), said a law against hate speech and hate crimes was long overdue and cited NCRB data showing that Hyderabad topped communal cases for three years till 2021.

Senior High Court Advocate C.R. Sukumar praised the Bill's intent to curb inflammatory speech but warned of serious flaws. He noted that vague definitions of "hate speech" and unchecked executive powers could turn it into a tool against dissent, journalists, and citizens, undermining free speech under Article 19(1)(a). While acknowledging its protective aim in a polarised society, Mr. Sukumar cautioned that its overbreadth risks weaponisation.

With careful redrafting, the Bill could evolve into a balanced law that genuinely protects communities while respecting fundamental freedoms. Without such correction, it risks becoming an example of how good intentions can result in bad legislation.

Consumption growth uneven among largely rural States

Differences across States indicate that growth is becoming increasingly State-specific, shaped by local economic conditions and structural factors

DATA POINT

Chandrasekar K.

In India, consumption is primarily being driven by cities, where higher incomes, better job opportunities and faster economic activity lead to stronger spending growth **(Chart 1)**. However, this narrative does not fully capture the reality in States such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, where more than 70% of the population resides in rural areas, except North East States and Union Territories. In these States, rural households play a crucial role in the economy, making it more meaningful to compare these States with each other rather than with more urbanised States.

A State with low initial consumption may show higher growth simply because it is in a catching-up phase. A simple example shows why such comparisons need care. A student improving from 25 marks to 30 marks shows a higher percentage increase than one moving from 95 to 97, yet the latter clearly performs better. By focusing exclusively on States with predominantly rural populations, the analysis allows for a more equitable comparison and offers a clearer picture of their relative performance in consumption growth.

This analysis uses Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) reports for 2011-12 and 2023-24 to examine how consumption patterns have evolved in rural-dominated States. The growth rates discussed are presented in real terms, meaning they have been adjusted for inflation. This adjustment is achieved using Consumer Price Index data, which removes the effects of rising prices over time. Without this adjustment, increases in consumption could reflect higher prices rather than actual improvements in spending power. By converting nominal expenditure into real terms, this analysis provides a clearer understanding of how consumption levels have genuinely changed between 2011-12 and 2023-24.

The differences across States become clearer when we look at individual performance **(Chart 2)**.

Bihar emerges as the leading performer among rural-dominated States. Rural consumption rose from ₹1,127 in 2011-12 to ₹3,670 in 2023-24, demonstrating significant nominal growth. After adjusting for inflation, it has expanded at a real rate of 4.7% annually, considerably higher than the all-India rural average of 3.4%. Urban consumption has also gone up swiftly at 4.6%, well above the national average of 2.9%. This shows that Bihar is not merely catching up from a low starting point but is also experiencing widespread growth in both rural and urban sectors.

In Odisha, Rural MPCE has grown at 4.5% while urban consumption has grown at 4.0%, both comfortably above the national averages. This suggests that Odisha is experiencing balanced and robust consumption growth, with urban areas showing a slight edge.

In Himachal Pradesh, rural consumption has grown at 4.0% and urban consumption at 3.7%, both above the national average in real terms. This reflects a stable and well-distributed growth pattern without sharp divergence between rural and urban areas.

In Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, rural consumption has grown at 3.8%, above the national rural average. However, urban consumption growth is 2.9%, same as the all-India average. This suggests moderate and stable growth, with rural areas performing slightly better than urban areas.

Uttar Pradesh shows a mixed pattern. In real terms, the rural consumption has grown at 3.8%, above the national average. However, urban consumption growth is 2.8%, slightly below the all-India urban average. This suggests that while rural areas are contributing to the growth, urban areas are limiting the overall momentum.

Rajasthan's rural consumption growth stands at 3.4%, equal to the national average, while urban growth at 3.0% is slightly above the all-India average. This indicates balanced, non-leading performance.

In Chhattisgarh, rural consumption growth is 3.1%, below the national average, while urban growth is 3.2%, above it. This suggests that urban areas are pulling ahead while rural consumption lags.

A useful way to interpret these trends is through a quadrant framework based on the all-India averages. States such as Bihar and Odisha fall in the high-growth quadrant, indicating strong and balanced performance across both rural and urban areas. Himachal Pradesh also shows steady progress above national averages. In contrast, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh show stronger rural growth than urban areas, suggesting that rural demand is driving overall consumption. Chhattisgarh shows the opposite pattern, where urban growth exceeds rural growth. Meanwhile, Rajasthan lies close to national averages, reflecting steady but not leading performance.

A notable aspect of the data is that rural consumption growth now matches or even exceeds urban growth in several States, reversing the traditional pattern in which cities led demand. This suggests that the constraint on overall consumption growth may lie more in urban moderation than in rural weakness. Still, differences across States indicate that growth is becoming increasingly State-specific, shaped by local economic conditions and structural factors. These trends collectively indicate a changing consumption landscape in which rural India is not only catching up but also playing a central role in driving demand.

(The writer is an Indian Statistical Service Officer. Views are personal.)

Uneven gains

The data for the charts were sourced from the HCES Reports for 2011-12 & 2023-24 from Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

CHART 1: Average Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) (in ₹) at nominal price in urban and rural areas over the years

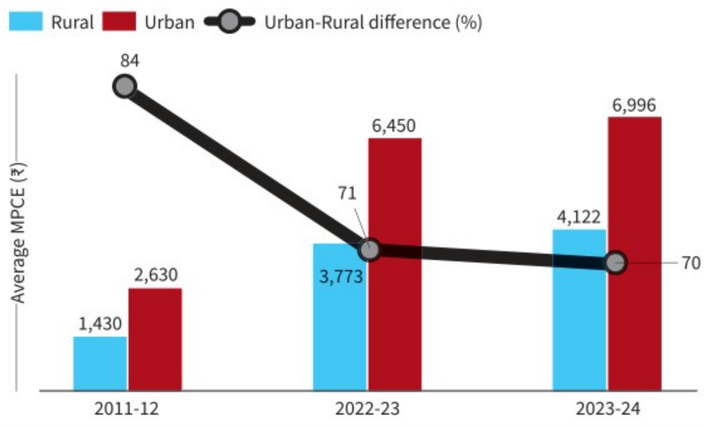
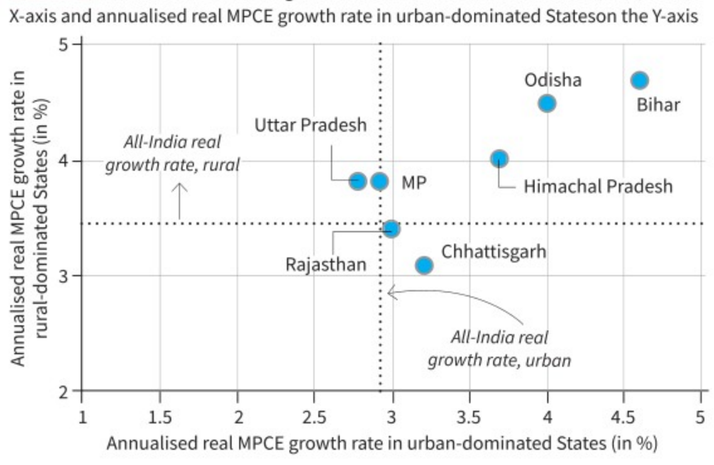


CHART 2: Annualised real MPCE growth rate in rural-dominated States (in %) on the X-axis and annualised real MPCE growth rate in urban-dominated Stateson the Y-axis



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 15, 1976

Krishna water for Madras: Accord signed in Delhi

New Delhi, April 14: A formal agreement to supply 15 tmc. ft. of water from the Krishna river to Madras was to-day formally signed at an inter-ministerial meeting held under the chairmanship of the Union Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Jagjivan Ram.

The Prime Minister had, during her visit to Madras in February, announced the willingness of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka to supply 5 tmc. ft. each from their share of the Krishna waters to meet the chronic drinking-water shortage in Madras. The agreement signed to-day is in pursuance of this announcement.

The meeting was attended by the Ministers in charge of Irrigation of Maharashtra and Karnataka. Mr. J. Vengal Rao, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister could not attend but had informed the Union Minister that he stood by the commitment already made. The agreement will be forwarded to him for formal approval.

A significant feature of the agreement is that the respective States would supply the specified quantity notwithstanding the nature of the verdict of the Krishna River Waters Dispute Tribunal. The verdict is expected in the next few weeks. The dispute relating to the sharing of the Krishna waters by Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka had been referred to a tribunal which gave its verdict, but the matter has not been finalised since the States have asked for clarifications.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 15, 1926

Food value of rice

Finest grades grown at Patna

A "Times" Special Service cable to "The Statesman" under date London, April 13th, states:–

The British public buys rice by outward appearance only, ignoring the fact that all cleaned rice has the same food value, writes Douglas Glennie in an illuminating article in "The Times" on Indian rice crops.

He asserts that it is a curious psychological fact that nine out of ten housewives, if asked where rice is produced, reply "India," yet they demand Japanese rice from their grocers. He points out Rangoon for cheap grade rice, Bassein for something better and Patna for the finest product.

From Page One

Govt. seeks delimitation based on 2011 Census

The proposed amendment removes this provision altogether. "The Bills being introduced in the name of implementing women's reservation amount to a death warrant for federal India," said John Brittas, CPI(M) MP.

The freeze on the readjustment of Lok Sabha seats written into Articles 81 and 82 was based on a political consensus negotiated by BJP Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2001 and enacted through a constitutional amendment. The Narendra Modi government is now proposing to remove that safeguard and effect an immediate redistribution of Lok Sabha seats based on the latest Census – which, as of now, is that of 2011.

The States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and Punjab had demanded an extension of the existing freeze for another 25 years beyond 2026. Not only has that demand been overlooked, the Centre is seeking parliamentary approval for an immediate redrawing of India's representative map.

Nothing to do with women's quota

"Barely 36 hours before Parliament reconvenes, without any multi-party meetings despite repeated demands, and with no attempt to refer these Bills to a parliamentary committee, the government is trying to unilaterally enforce its wishes on the country. This has nothing to do with women's reservation and everything to do with delimitation for BJP's 2029 election plans," Mr. Singhvi said.

While all large States will receive some additional seats in the Lok Sabha, assuming all 815 permitted seats are allocated, some will see their strength rise dramatically. Uttar Pradesh will gain 58 seats over its current 80, while Kerala will gain only three, taking it from 20 to 23, if 815 seats are distributed according to the 2011 population distribution.

U.P.'s share of the Lok Sabha will rise from 14.73% to 16.24%, while Kerala's will shrink from 3.68% to 2.7%. Bihar will move from 40 seats (7.37%) to 72 seats (8.47%); Maharashtra from 48 to 78; and Tamil Nadu from 39 to 50 – a reduction in its current share from 7.18% to 5.88%.

14 killed, 20 injured in power plant blast

The company said the incident involved personnel belonging to NTPC GE Power Services Ltd., one of the contractors of the power plant.

"Our immediate priority is to ensure the best possible medical assistance and treatment for all those affected. We are extending full support to the injured and are closely coordinating with medical teams and local authorities. We are in the process of ascertaining details, and a thorough investigation has been initiated in coordination with our partner and relevant authorities," the statement added.

Another police officer said boilers generate heat of around 600 degrees Celsius, and when the blast occurred, the intense heat and impact spread across a large area within the power plant campus.

A post on the Prime Minister's official handle @PMOIndia read: "The mishap at a power plant in Sakti district, Chhattisgarh, is tragic. I extend my condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover at the earliest. The local administration is assisting those affected. An ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given ₹50,000: PM @narendramodi".

Mr. Sai announced ₹5 lakh compensation for the families of the deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured.

He said the State government stood firmly with the affected families and that he has directed officials to ensure immediate relief and free, proper treatment for all the injured, warning that any negligence would not be tolerated.

Last month, the State Government informed the Chhattisgarh Assembly that 296 workers had lost their lives in industrial accidents across the State over the past three years, while another 248 workers suffered injuries during the same period.

Revanth urges Stalin to spearhead protests

T.N. CM accuses BJP of forcibly convening the Special Session amid the elections to 'bulldoze' an amendment on delimitation; DMK MPs will take part in the session, he adds; Telangana CM calls for a united southern front; Karnataka CM accuses BJP of trying to 'redistribute political power'

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

> I am not only the Chief Minister but also the leader of the DMK, a massive political movement. You will see a Tamil Nadu you have not seen before. India will once again see the DMK of the 1950s and 1960s... Every family will take to the streets
>
> **M.K. STALIN**
> Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

> The hybrid model [of seat expansion] will ensure that no state is penalised for progress
>
> **REVANTH REDDY**
> Telangana Chief Minister

> Delimitation is not a routine administrative exercise. It is a redistribution of political power, and in Parliament, numbers are not symbolic; they are decisive
>
> **SIDDARAMAIAH**
> Karnataka Chief Minister

The Chief Ministers of non-BJP-ruled States, especially in southern India, on Tuesday stepped up their attacks against the Union government's proposal on delimitation ahead of the implementation of reservation for women.

Even as Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin warned of a massive protest that would "bring the State to a standstill" if the Centre's delimitation proposal affected the southern States and offered more political power to the northern States, Telangana CM Revanth Reddy asked him to spearhead a united front of southern States against the proposed "pro rata" formula for increasing Lok Sabha seats.

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah accused the BJP of political motives in the timing of its proposal, as well as in its attempt to diminish the importance of southern States where it has had limited electoral success. He urged the Centre to implement women's reservation within the current delimitation itself.

Opposing note

In Andhra Pradesh, however, CM N. Chandrababu Naidu, who is part of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, struck an opposing note in the South, appealing to all parties to "rise above their differences" and support women's reservation.

In West Bengal, which is also going to the polls this month, CM Mamata Banerjee accused the BJP of introducing its delimitation proposal to divide the State and the country and derive political mileage at a time when it does not even have a full majority at the Centre, but is dependent on the support of two other parties.

'Final warning'

Mr. Stalin accused the BJP of forcibly convening the special session of Parliament on April 16 amid the elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal to "bulldoze" an amendment on delimitation, but added that DMK MPs would participate in the session. MPs had sought an appointment with the PM to get an assurance that southern States would not be affected by the proposal, but did not get it, he said.

The DMK chief said the BJP government should not think it could silently implement delimitation because it was election time and the party would be occupied with election work. "I am not only the Chief Minister but also the leader of the DMK, a massive political movement. You will see a Tamil Nadu you have not seen before. India will once again see the DMK of the 1950s and 1960s... Every family will take to the streets," he said in a video message. "I say it in the name of Ambedkar: if Tamil Nadu is affected, we will draw India's attention. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi], this is the final warning from Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu will fight. Tamil Nadu will win," he said.

Hybrid model

Apart from his appeal to fellow southern CMs to present a united front, Mr. Reddy wrote to Mr. Modi, calling for a national political consensus on the proposed increase in Lok Sabha seats and urging immediate implementation of women's reservation without linking it to seat expansion.

He proposed a hybrid model for seat expansion. Under this approach, if Lok Sabha seats are increased from 543 to 850, half of the additional seats should be allocated based on population, while the remaining half should be distributed based on Gross State Domestic Product indicators, he said. "The hybrid model will ensure that no state is penalised for progress while maintaining democratic representation and giving all regions a fair voice in national governance," Mr Reddy said.

In an analysis of the PM's "reassurance" to southern States that they will not lose out, as seat increases will be proportionate (50%) across States, Mr. Siddaramaiah warned that the changes in absolute numbers would harm the southern States.

"Delimitation is not a routine administrative exercise. It is a redistribution of political power, and in Parliament, numbers are not symbolic; they are decisive," he said, noting that large States where the BJP is in power stand to gain disproportionately. "As total seats increase while the share remains unchanged, the gap widens and the relative influence of southern states weakens. This means a party can win power by winning a few large states, even if it is weak elsewhere."

Opposition support key to pass women's reservation, delimitation legislation

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

The Opposition's support is critical for the passage of the three Bills intended to enable the implementation of the women's reservation policy ahead of the 2029 general election. The government currently falls short of the two-thirds majority required to push through a Constitution Amendment Bill.

The Bills are scheduled to be debated in the Lok Sabha on April 16 and 17. With the present strength of the Lok Sabha at 540, at least 360 members would need to vote in favour if all are present.

At present, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has 293 members, while the Opposition INDIA bloc has 234. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to reply to the debate on April 17.

The Congress, the DMK, the Trinamool Congress, and the Left parties, together accounting for 152 MPs, have voiced strong objections to the Bills.

The BJP's key ally, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which has 16 MPs, is also concerned about the lack of clarity. "While we believe the BJP will not indulge in any misadventure, this should not have been left ambiguous," a senior TDP leader said. The party is also likely to object to the Bill for ignoring a long-standing demand to give voting rights to associate members of the Delimitation Commission. Under the Delimitation Bill, 2026, five MLAs and five MPs from each State will be members of the commission.

K.C. Venugopal said that lifting the freeze on seats will disproportionately harm States.

The Samajwadi Party, which has 37 MPs, has not yet taken a clear position. Speaking to reporters on Monday in Sultanpur, party chief Akhilesh Yadav termed the move a "distractionary tactic", and accused the government of pushing the exercise without consultations. "How can you have delimitation without first having a Census," he asked. The Opposition is hoping to create a consensus in its meeting on April 15.

Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal told *The Hindu* that both the timing – amid ongoing polls – and the lack of consultation were suspect. He warned that lifting the freeze on seats based on the 1971 population would disproportionately harm States that have successfully controlled population growth.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said: "When the intent behind a Bill is mischievous and the content of it is devious, the extent of damage to parliamentary democracy is enormous."

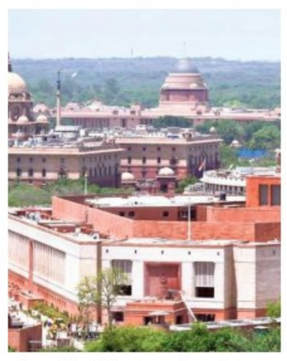
Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien on Tuesday, said the NDA lacked the numbers to pass the Bills. "This has nothing to do with women's reservation. It is only about bringing in delimitation," he said.

Constitution Amendment Bill moots possible change in size of State Assemblies

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026 proposes significant changes to the size and composition of the Assemblies by restarting the process of delimitation and removing the long-standing constitutional freeze, in effect since 1976, on readjustment of seats based on population.

The Bill will be introduced in the Special Session of Parliament commencing on Thursday.



The Bill will be introduced in a Special Session of Parliament commencing on Thursday .

The proposed amendments, in effect, mean that Assemblies will see a change in their total number of seats depending on population changes, and constituency boundaries within States will also be redrawn as part of the delimitation exercise, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill said.

The Bill seeks to amend the provisions in Article 170, which governs the composition of the Assemblies, to enable a fresh readjustment of the number of Assembly seats and the redrawing of territorial constituencies on the basis of a future Census to be specified by Parliament.

In doing so, it removes the existing freeze that has prevented such readjustments since 1976. The Bill proposes to delete the third proviso of Article 170 that had postponed the delimitation exercise until after the first Census which will be conducted in 2026.

The amendment also replaces the earlier formulation that allowed Parliament to determine the authority for delimitation with a provision explicitly assigning the task to a Delimitation Commission.

It further revises the explanation to Article 170(2) so that "population" for the purpose of seat allocation will mean the population ascertained in the Census that Parliament decides to adopt.

The Bill substitutes Article 334A to operationalise the one-third reservation for women in the Assemblies. The provision states that the reservation will come into effect only after a fresh delimitation exercise is carried out on the basis of the latest published Census. As of now, the latest published Census is 2011.

Tribal representation

The Bill provides for safeguards to ensure the delimitation exercise does not dilute tribal representation in certain Northeastern States.

The delimitation process itself will be governed by the proposed Delimitation Bill, 2026, which provides for the constitution of a Delimitation Commission by the Centre.

The commission will be chaired by a former or sitting Supreme Court judge and will include the Chief Election Commissioner, or an Election Commissioner nominated by the Election Commission, and the State Election Commissioner of the concerned State.

Women's participation is essential for country's development: Modi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the participation of women in the political process was "non-negotiable" in adding vigour to India's development journey.

In an open letter addressed to the women of the country, he said that it was "this principle that led to the passage of the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' in 2023 and it is the same principle that has made this constitutional amendment the need of the hour".

> The amendments to the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' should be passed in the three-day special sitting of Parliament, beginning April 16, and any further delay would be unfortunate, and a gross injustice to the women of India
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister

Parliament is set to debate for consideration, and pass amendments to the Constitution and the Women's Reservation Act, 2023 this week, between April 16 to April 18. The Act seeks to reserve 33% of seats in Parliament and State legislatures for women. Under the current law, women's reservation would not have become enforceable before 2034, as it depends on delimitation post the 2027 Census.

To implement it from the 2029 Lok Sabha polls, amendments to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam are being taken up in a special session. With women excelling in many fields, it was only fitting that there was an increase in the participation of women in legislative bodies, Mr. Modi said. The amendments to the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' should be passed in the three-day special sitting of Parliament, beginning April 16, and any further delay would be unfortunate, and a gross injustice to the women of India, he said.

Modi, Trump discuss need to keep Strait of Hormuz secure

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of continued tension in the Gulf region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held a conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump and discussed the need for keeping the Strait of Hormuz "open and secure". The telephone call from Mr. Trump came three days after the U.S. and Iran held a round of discussion in Islamabad to resolve the crisis that started with the U.S. bombing Iranian targets in Tehran on February 28.

"Received a call from my friend President Donald Trump. We reviewed the substantial progress achieved in our bilateral cooperation in various sectors. We are committed to further strengthening our Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership in all areas. We also discussed the situation in West Asia and stressed the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure," said Prime Minister Modi in a post on X.

GE Aerospace, HAL inch closer to seal deal on F414 jet engines

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

U.S. defence major GE Aerospace on Tuesday said it had made significant progress with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) towards finalising a partnership to co-produce F414 jet engines in India. It signed a contract with the Indian Air Force for a new F404-IN20 engine depot.

APPEAL

Manoanuthra is 8 years old suffering from "B Cell - Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia" and needs Chemotherapy and Radiation Therapy at Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai. The total expenditure is **Rs. 8,00,000/-**. Her father is a Electrician. The family is very poor and cannot afford this huge cost. Please help her to have a bright future. Donations sent by Ch/D.D. favouring **Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai will be acknowledged**. The donations sent through Ch/D.D/NEFT Transfer & GOOGLE PAY (Canara Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/c No. 60182010063310, IFSC No: CNRB0016018) favouring **WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE** is exempted under 80G IT.

All correspondence is done through **WWS,** Regd Public Charitable Trust, **Flat No. GF 1, Corddel Apartments, O.No.13, N.No. 29, Pycrofts Garden Lane, Chennai-600006. Ph: 044-42137401/ 31523781/ 7338978027. E-mail ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com.**

WWS

ASSEMBLY POLLS

Officials told to visit vulnerable areas in Bengal

The West Bengal government on Tuesday directed district administrations and the police to jointly visit vulnerable areas within the next three days ahead of the Assembly election, an official said.

In a letter, Chief Secretary Dushyant Nariala asks District Magistrates (DMs), Commissioners of Police (CPs) and Superintendents of Police (SPs) to identify localities that witnessed incidents of violence or intimidation during previous elections.

"Such places should be visited within the next 2-3 days by DMs/DEOs along with CPs/SPs and District Force Coordinators," the letter said, adding that the visits should be covered by the press.

An official said the objective is to reassure voters and ensure a peaceful atmosphere in identified pockets. PTI

The objective of the visits is to boost public confidence before the Assembly election. ANI

2,926 people to contest in West Bengal polls

A total of 2,926 candidates are in the fray in the 294 constituencies in the upcoming West Bengal Assembly election.

The Assembly polls would be held in two phases in West Bengal on April 23 and April 29. While 1,487 candidates will contest 152 seats for Phase 1, in Phase 2, a total of 1,448 contestants will fight in 142 constituencies.

The last date for filing nominations for the polls in West Bengal was April 9 and the last date for withdrawal of nominations was April 13.

Citizens can view the details of their candidates including their educational qualifications, criminal antecedents, assets and liabilities and download their affidavits from the "Know Your Candidate" tab on the ECINet App, the EC said in a statement.

"BJP has persecuted Bengali-speaking people in BJP-ruled States. They have belittled our culture, and conspired to rob people's rights

ABHISHEK BANERJEE
Trinamool Congress leader

'EC singled out Trinamool leaders'

The Trinamool Congress on Tuesday alleged that only its leaders, specifically Abhishek Banerjee, have been "singled out for intrusive checks" of their vehicles by security personnel, based on "targeted instructions" from the Election Commission. The poll body has not yet responded to the allegations. PTI

"Press the EVM buttons next to the lotus sign so hard in regions of north Bengal so that infiltrators across India can feel the electric shock

AMIT SHAH
Union Home Minister

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses a public meeting, in Murshidabad on Tuesday. ANI

Trinamool paved way for BJP in Bengal, says Rahul

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday addressed three public meetings in poll-bound West Bengal, accusing the Trinamool Congress of paving the way for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the State.

"The BJP spreads violence. Their Prime Minister is 'compromised'. I won't even talk about them. On the other hand, the Trinamool has paved the way for the BJP in West Bengal. Because, if the Trinamool had done its work, provided for your income, and didn't spread violence, the BJP wouldn't have been seen here," Mr. Gandhi said.

He addressed election meetings at Uttar Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad districts and sought support for his party candidates. The Congress leader was canvassing for his party's candidates after five years since the Assembly polls in 2021.

'Industries destroyed'

Speaking at a meeting at Raiganj in Uttar Dinajpur, Mr. Gandhi accused Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of destroying industries in the State, and alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also trying to do the same in the entire country.

"West Bengal was earlier a hub of industry. The Left and then Mamata Banerjee have ruined the entire industry of the State. If we talk about violence, about atrocities on women, then we have to talk about rape and murder. There is no accountability in West Bengal. The Trinamool goons can do whatever they want," he said.

Mr. Gandhi said that in its previous manifesto, the Trinamool Congress government had promised about five lakh jobs but about 84 lakh youth had applied for unemployment honorarium this year.

The Congress leader targeted both the BJP and the Trinamool Congress over corruption. "If (Narendra) Modi is the most corrupt Prime Minister in the country, then the Trinamool has broken all records of corruption in Bengal," Mr. Gandhi said, referring to the Saradha and Rose Valley scams.

Crimes against women

Alleging a rise in crimes against women and political violence, he said, "A total dictatorship is going on in Bengal."

He accused the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh of "destroying the Constitution with their "hate-filled thinking". Accusing the BJP of being "involved in vote theft", he termed the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls an "unconstitutional" exercise.

The Congress has decided to go solo and fielded candidates for all 294 Assembly seats, breaking up a nearly decade-long electoral understanding with the Left Front in the State.

During the rallies, the Congress leader reiterated the party's promises in its manifesto, including providing ₹10 lakh health insurance for every citizen, ₹15,000 to each farmer, 200 units of free electricity for agricultural purposes and ₹2,000 to every woman.

Mr. Gandhi criticised the Prime Minister over the India-U.S. trade deal. "It will lead to closure of small and mid-size industries, and cause job loss in India... Control over Modi is in the hands of U.S. President Donald Trump," he said, adding the trade deal would harm workers, farmers and small traders.

Caste card still retains its validity in the electoral scene of Tamil Nadu

DMK and AIADMK can ill-afford to ignore caste as it remains integral to politics, and they continue to rely on dominant communities in ticket distribution; parties, barring the Left, make it a point to interact with caste leaders and they consider caste important for their survival

IN FOCUS

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu has generally been showcased as an egalitarian State that has been able to transcend the barrier of caste, thanks to the Dravidian movement. But, when it comes to elections, the factor of caste is extremely important, which the two Dravidian forces can ill-afford to ignore.

According to the findings of a couple of studies on the caste profiles of candidates put up by the formations led by the DMK and the AIADMK, three communities – Vanniyakula Kshatriya (Vanniyar), Mukkulathor (Thevars) and Kongu Vellalar (Gounders) – take the lion's share. Of the 188 general constituencies, about 45% of the DMK-led coalition's candidates and around 55% of the AIADMK-led front's candidates belong to these groups, up from 38% and 47% respectively five years ago.

This time, the DMK and its allies have nominated 29 candidates each from the Vanniyar and the Kongu Vellalar communities and 27 Mukkulathors, whereas the figures for the AIADMK-led alliance are 43, 28 and 32, respectively.

The AIADMK's Edappadi K. Palaniswami and the DMK's O. Panneerselvam campaigning for the election. M. MOORTHY & L. BALACHANDAR

Element of irony

As far as the AIADMK is concerned, an element of irony is being felt this time, as it was considered not long ago a "party of Mukkulathors" because of the proximity of V.K. Sasikala to former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, who was the party's general secretary during 1988-2016. But, in the current election, Ms. Sasikala, now heading the All India Puratchi Thalaivar Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AIPTMMK), and the Dravidian major's former coordinator O. Panneerselvam, now in the DMK – both Mukkulathors – are vigorously campaigning against the AIADMK's general secretary, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, a Kongu Vellalar.

As for the Scheduled Castes, the two fronts have fielded a few candidates in general seats in addition to 44 meant for the community.

Surprisingly, Brahmins, widely perceived in the State as a liability in electoral politics, are being courted by the Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) and the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), which have fielded six and two candidates, respectively. The AIADMK, for the first time since 1991, has not fielded any Brahmin candidate, while the DMK, as in the past, has chosen not to put up anyone from the community, even though it admitted the AIADMK's former MP V. Maitreyan into its fold about eight months ago.

Idea reinforced

Pointing out that caste remains integral to the State elections, R. Kannan, a former UN diplomat and now a political writer, acknowledges that "we have not been able to transcend caste". The emphasis on social justice has ironically reinforced the idea of caste. Electoral politics is the route to real power. Feudalism and caste were intertwined in the Congress era (up to 1967). In the case of the DMK, the caste pyramid has been preserved except that the lower tier of various castes could move forward, as opposed to the rich and the landed in the Congress era. The AIADMK's founder, M.G. Ramachandran, democratised the Tamil polity even further. But, caste remains central to any equation, though there have been exceptions, Dr. Kannan explains.

Broadly echoing the political writer's stand on social justice, K.A. Manikumar, Professor of history at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University in Tirunelveli, says affirmative action has rendered the distribution of social justice disproportionately. Certain "upper-caste non-Brahmins" were the beneficiaries in the first instance. Castes such as the Gounders, Mukkulathors and Vanniyars have "used their caste solidarity" to get into the legislature and other institutions.

As they are well-entrenched, those caste groups, which have been feeling sidelined, "deploy the instrument of caste" to mobilise their people. Generally, political parties, barring the Left, make it a point to interact with caste leaders at all levels during elections to seek their support, Professor Manikumar said, adding that politicians consider caste important for their survival.

G. Palanithurai, a veteran academic who headed the Chair for Panchayat Raj Studies in the Department of Political Science and Development Administration of the Gandhigram Rural Institute, finds fault with the political parties, which are wedded to the age-old caste calculations. "The people in general have moved on, and only the parties have not caught up with them," he says.

'West Bengal election must be postponed till all legitimate voters are on the rolls'

If the rolls are not complete before being frozen, then what is the legitimacy of the election itself, asks five-time Congress MP and party's Baharampur candidate; a sinister design is being played in name of construction of temples, mosques, he says

INTERVIEW

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury

Shrabana Chatterjee
Shiv Sahay Singh

SHRABANA CHATTERJEE

Five-time Congress MP and former leader of the party in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who is contesting the West Bengal Assembly election from Baharampur constituency, says there is no difference between the politics of Mamata Banerjee and Narendra Modi. He says the special intensive revision is an unprecedented attack on the electorate of West Bengal. Edited excerpts:

You have been saying that the election should be postponed until all legitimate voters are included on the final voter list. Since the campaign for election has started, do you still feel the same?

Absolutely, this election should be stopped because not a single legitimate voter should be left out. What is the responsibility of the Election Commission? It is incumbent on the EC to enrol every voter. If the electoral rolls are not complete before being frozen, then what is the legitimacy of the election itself? Because free and fair election is directly dependent on a free and fair electoral roll.

Before the start of the SIR, the Chief Election Commissioner had said that not a single legitimate voter will be left out, but now he has changed his stance. What do you think?

Yes, the EC is not sticking to its own commitment. Every day, sermons are being given by Mamata Banerjee. She had promised the people of West Bengal that she will be the last person to be included in the electoral rolls. But when lakhs of people are being left out, what is the rationale of Ms. Banerjee to seek a re-election? She should oppose this election where legitimate voters are being deprived.

Do you think we should be coming out of the religious polarisation and the mandir/masjid politics which has been prevailing in West Bengal?

A sinister design is being played in the name of construction of temples and mosques. I am not against construction of religious structures, but the issue is the way it is being done to polarise the people. Have you ever seen a foundation stone of a mosque being laid out before the construction? It is clear that some sort of political dividend is expected out of such activities.

We are trying to tell the people that the construction of temples and mosques will not solve their problems. It is just to hide the government's own inefficiencies and incompetencies. The issues related to our daily lives are being sidelined and certain forces are taking advantage of it.

How do you think that the BJP and Trinamool are gaining out of politics of polarisation?

There is no difference in the political character of Mamata and Modi. The manner in which the CBI and other agencies target anti-Modi forces in Delhi, in a similar manner those who oppose Mamata in West Bengal are targeted by her State machinery.

You have been a strong supporter of the Left-Congress alliance. Wouldn't it have been better had the two parties joined hands this election?

During my tenure as West Bengal Congress president I had supported this alliance sincerely. But politics is a dynamic phenomenon. This time, Congress thought it was prudent to fight the election alone on the capability of the party.

You are a five-time MP. Now you are contesting the Assembly election from Baharampur, where you stay. You have faced protests during your campaign. How do you see this development?

I am being treated by Mamata Banerjee as her sworn enemy. She does not make a differentiation between an enemy and an adversary. Politically I am her adversary, but I am not her enemy. But in West Bengal when democratic spaces are being squeezed out and autocracy is being enforced upon people then any campaigning by the Opposition is being seen as an act by the enemy. All kinds of nefarious activities are hatched to defeat me. Their single objective is to defeat me.

Modi asks BJP workers to list 'crimes' of Trinamool

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

In an interaction with BJP workers on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked them to make a list of "crimes" and "failures" of the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal.

Mr. Modi held a virtual meeting, "*Mera* booth *sabse mazboot* (My booth is the strongest)", with the *karyakartas* of West Bengal BJP and discussed poll preparedness.

"First, make a list of the crimes committed in your area. Tell the people that these happen because the goons have the blessings of big Trinamool leaders," Mr. Modi said. He urged the BJP workers to remind the people of Bengal about the list of "failures and crimes" of the ruling party.

The Prime Minster said that there was a sense of fear and unease across the State. Youth remained troubled about lack of jobs, potato farmers were scared of Trinamool's "syndicates", and people were in constant fear because of rapes, murders, riots, and political violence in West Bengal. He instructed the BJP workers to reach out to women and address their concerns.

INBRIEF

PM inaugurates six-lane Delhi-Dehradun expressway

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday inaugurated a six-lane Delhi-Dehradun expressway, a ₹12,000-crore project that is set to reduce travel time between the two cities from five-six hours to about 2-2.5 hours. The 213-km access-controlled corridor now open for use is expected to significantly improve regional connectivity, linking key towns in Uttar Pradesh, before reaching Dehradun. It will also integrate with major national corridors, including the Delhi-Mumbai, Delhi-Katra, and Delhi-Meerut expressways.

ED secures 10-day remand of I-PAC director Vinesh Chandel

The Enforcement Directorate has secured a 10-day remand of I-PAC director Vinesh Kumar Chandel in connection with an alleged money-laundering case. The ED probe is based on an FIR registered by the Delhi police. The investigation has allegedly unearthed multiple instances of financial irregularities and various modes of money laundering, including receipt of accounted and unaccounted funds, issuance of bogus bills and invoices, as well as movement of cash through 'hawala' channels with international links. The agency has so far detected ₹50 crore allegedly linked to crime.

Deportation policy seeks tighter norms

States have been told to set up a special task force in each district to 'detect, identify and deport/send back illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar', and provide a monthly status report; States will also have to open 'holding centres' with a 10-foot-high boundary ringed with barbed wire

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union government has formulated a new deportation policy under which all States have been asked to set up a special task force in each district to "detect, identify and deport/send back illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar", and provide a monthly status report on foreigners who are missing or overstaying their visas.

The States have been asked to operationalise "holding centres/camps" with a 10-foot-high boundary ringed with barbed wire, to restrict the movement of such undocumented migrants till they are deported or "sent back" to Bangladesh or Myanmar, says the policy framed by the Union Home Ministry.

An upper limit of 90 days has been fixed to verify the antecedents of suspected Bangladeshi or Myanmarese nationals, if they claim to be a resident of another State. Private buildings could also be hired to run as holding centres, if government land was not available, the Ministry said. The States have been asked to upload documents, including Aadhaar, driving licence, and PAN cards, obtained by illegal migrants on a portal, so that they could be cancelled, and the person "blacklisted" in government records.

Many sent back

After the regime change in Bangladesh in August 2024, the police across the country were asked by the Ministry to detect Bangladeshis who had illegally entered the country and were living here on forged documents. The drive assumed momentum after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, 2025, and Operation Sindoor on May 7, 2025. In some cases, undocumented Bangladeshis were flown on Indian Air Force (IAF) planes and sent to Bangladesh via the land border. At least seven West Bengal residents who were pushed to Bangladesh by the Border Security Force (BSF) on suspicion of being Bangladeshis were brought back to India due to the intervention of the West Bengal government.

Last year, the Gujarat Police had conducted an overnight operation in Ahmedabad to identify undocumented migrants. FILE PHOTO

A major part of the policy that was shared with the States in February, a copy of which has been seen by *The Hindu*, reiterates and consolidates the existing guidelines with a separate chapter dedicated to "illegally staying Bangladeshis/Myanmar nationals in the country". The guidelines on "holding centres" will be applicable to other foreigners awaiting deportation, and those declared foreigners by Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs). FTs are unique to Assam.

States have been directed to immediately initiate nationality verification of arrested foreigners so that travel documents are ready upon the completion of judicial proceedings, enabling expeditious deportation. "After deportation, proposals for blacklisting of such foreign nationals to prevent their future entry into India may be sent to the Bureau of Immigration," the Ministry said. "Foreigners Identification Portal (FIP)" has been launched to capture the biometric and demographic details of "illegal foreigners", it said.

"Bangladeshis/Myanmar nationals who are intercepted at India's land or maritime border, shall immediately be sent back by the designated Border Guarding Forces/ Coast Guard, then and there, after capturing their biometrics and demographic details on the FIP," the Ministry said.

In case of people who inadvertently cross the border, the designated border guarding force shall take them into custody and interrogate them, and "if found innocent, they may be handed over to the border guarding force of Bangladesh or Myanmar", or to the police, if found guilty, before capturing the biometrics, the Ministry said.

The holding centre should have separate enclosures for men and women, and should be equipped with all amenities, including an LPG connection in the kitchen, fire safety system, strict access control measures and adequate security personnel for round-the-clock security, it said.

"There should be sufficient open space within the compound for foreigners whose movements are restricted to move around in a secure environment," the Ministry added, and it should be ensured that members of the same family were not separated, and all family members were housed in the same holding centre/camp.

"The persons housed in the holding centres/camps should be permitted to meet/communicate with the family members and no restrictions shall be imposed on this account. Such persons may be allowed to keep basic mobile phones to communicate with their family members and the Embassy/High Commission concerned. Facility of landline phone may also be provided in the Holding Centre/Camp for use of inmates," the MHA said.

The MHA said that holding centres should not be run from jails, and States may also consider the engagement of language interpreters, mobile medical dispensaries, and 24×7 ambulances, and special attention may be given to women/nursing mothers, transgenders, children, etc. It also suggested crèche facilities for children, and educational facilities for child inmates, by admitting them in local schools nearby.

After Noida protests, U.P. announces hike in wages

Mayank Kumar
NOIDA

The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday announced an interim hike in minimum wages for unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled workers, a day after workers organised a massive protest in Noida, in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district, which turned violent. The State government, however, has rejected claims that the minimum pay has been raised to ₹20,000 per month and stated that employers are not following this direction.

The State government announced that it has engaged with all relevant stakeholders and has opted to implement a temporary increase in the minimum wage. As part of this temporary measure, the State government has increased the minimum wage for unskilled workers throughout the State by as much as 21%, effective from April 1.

Two students dead after taking drugs at concert in Mumbai, say police

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Two fellow students and three individuals linked to organising the concert, have been arrested

Two college students, a man and a woman, both 24, died after consuming drugs at a music concert in Mumbai on Saturday night, the police said. Another student remains under intensive care in a hospital.

The police have arrested five people: two fellow students and three individuals linked to organising the concert.

A group of friends from a college were among the 4,000-strong crowd at the concert at the Nesco Exhibition Centre in Goregaon East. According to the police, three students from the group consumed drugs during the event. Soon, their health deteriorated, and they were taken to hospitals.

The man died in a private hospital in Goregaon on Sunday. Two women were initially taken to a nearby hospital and later moved to another as their condition worsened. One of them died on Monday, while the third remains in the intensive care unit.

The police said the organisers failed to take precautions, allowing drugs to be brought in and consumed at the venue. Some among the audience suffered health issues due to alcohol and drug consumption. Two of them have been admitted to the Hindu Hriday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray Trauma Care Hospital in Jogeshwari.

The Vanrai police registered a case on Monday under Sections 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 125(b) (act endangering life or personal safety of others), 223(b) (disobedience to an order), and 3(5) (general explanation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, along with provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.

The bodies were sent to JJ Hospital for a postmortem. The police have not disclosed the names of the deceased or the accused. A spokesperson for Nesco stated that the firm was cooperating with the authorities.

The Opposition Congress slammed the BJP-led government in the State over the deaths.

The "inept and shameless" functioning of the government has pushed the State's youth into the grip of drugs, said Maharashtra Congress president Harshvardhan Sapkal.

Bihar govt. to accelerate growth under '7 Nishchay-3' plan, says Nitish

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar on Tuesday said that Bihar would make significant advancements under the 7 Nishchay-3 plan for the State.

Mr. Kumar, who resigned as Chief Minister of the State, wrote in a social media post, "You know that on November 24, 2005, the NDA government was formed in the State for the first time... Work has been done for everyone, every sector... for women and youth."

"For the next five years, that is, from 2025 to 2030, the formation of 7 Nishchay-3 (seven resolves) has been done. This will lead to even more work, as a result of which Bihar will advance significantly," he stated.

The 7 Nishchay-3 Programme is Bihar's third multi-year development agenda, covering the period 2025-2030.

Nitish Kumar with Bihar Governor Syed Ata Hasnain after tendering his resignation as Chief Minister in Patna on Tuesday. PTI

On Tuesday, Mr. Nitish reached the Raj Bhavan along with senior NDA leaders at 3 p.m. and submitted his resignation to the Governor. He came out in five minutes accompanied by JD(U) leader Vijay Kumar Choudhary and BJP leader Samrat Choudhary, and headed for the CM's official residence at 1 Anne Marg.

About an hour later, Mr. Samrat Choudhary was unanimously elected the the leader of the BJP Legislature Party at a meeting held at the party's State headquarters in Patna. His name was proposed by fellow Deputy CM Vijay Kumar Sinha, and seconded by other party leaders, including Mangal Pandey, Raghvendra Pratap Singh, Renu Devi, and Dilip Jaiswal, and then officially announced by central observer Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

In a social media post, Mr. Choudhary expressed his "heartfelt gratitude" to the party's central leadership of the BJP for "reposing their trust in him".

"This is not merely a position for me but a sacred opportunity to serve the people of Bihar, to fulfil their trust and dreams," he said.

"I will remain continuously committed to taking Bihar to new heights of development, good governance and prosperity. Your affection, blessings and cooperation are my greatest strength," he added.

He was then elected the leader of the NDA legislature party at a meeting held at the Central Hall of the State legislature. Mr. Kumar garlanded him and led the applause to welcome his successor, even as Mr. Choudhary touched Mr. Kumar's feet to seek his blessings.

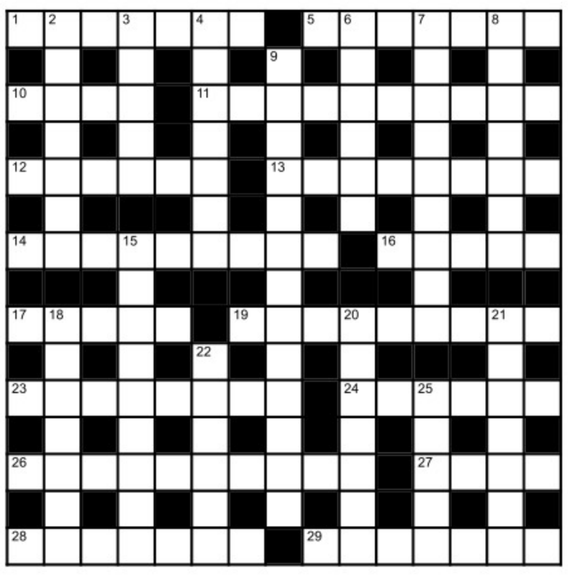
As Mr. Choudhary and a group of NDA leaders headed to the Raj Bhavan to stake claim to form the new government, posters adorned the streets of Patna welcoming him as the new Chief Minister.

TH CROSSWORD + 14768

(set by Avtaar)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Party in bar turned extremely raunchy (7)
5 Put on stage for Mussolini, perhaps (7)
10 Small water inlet outside entrance to bathroom (4)
11 Mobile mass seen briefly on river around source of oil (6,4)
12 Caution by English guards to walk softly (6)
13 Shout about bone across centrepiece in grill used in the kitchen (8)
14 Stir as tension breaks (9)
16 Fiend in English county heartlessly stealing money (5)
17 Very likely committed Bob's heading to border (5)
19 Snare in celebration springing back behind bust (5,4)
23 Rum from Antigua - rare medicine - on the counter (8)
24 Overcome by corrosion, banks of Euphrates turned reddish brown (6)
26 Seals cracks in intricately woven material (10)
27 Helps millions fleeing terrible disease (4)
28 Messenger Avtaar's apprehending scoundrel with hesitation (7)
29 Dream of fellow worker shattered, say (7)

Down

2 Devious general cancelling PR (7)
3 Country broadcast logotype giving away 50 rings (5)
4 Honour vision about becoming leader (7)
6 Back member after German leaves fold (6)
7 Purge toxic insecticide with fluorine, after dropping ice (9)
8 Man in church given port for good health (7)
9 My coach's positive when I have cut off straying of the mind and body (13)
15 US city backs probing radical faceless agencies, having identical traits (9)
18 Lover at eatery having had too much (7)
20 Coffee-maker is included in 22, say (7)
21 Section of Mossad negated flipping schedules (7)
22 Stock exchange? (6)
25 Lean factory replacing leader with second (5)

SUDOKU

		3		8				9
9	4		6		1			5
		1	5	9		2		
								7
1	8						6	2
5								
		5		4	3	7		
6			8		9		2	1
3				6		9		

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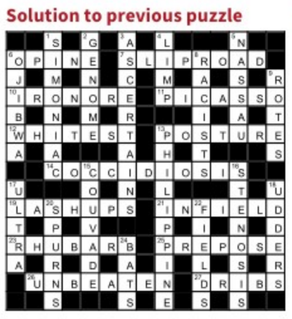
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

6	3	7	8	5	4	2	1	9
9	8	5	2	1	7	6	4	3
4	1	2	6	9	3	5	7	8
8	2	6	1	4	9	7	3	5
5	4	3	7	2	8	9	6	1
1	7	9	5	3	6	4	8	2
2	6	8	9	7	1	3	5	4
3	5	1	4	6	2	8	9	7
7	9	4	3	8	5	1	2	6

FAITH

Decoding the new year

The Tamil New Year is ushered in with the reading and hearing of the *panchangam* (almanac). What was once a daily ritual has now become an annual aspect, factored in by many people alongside temple visits, seeking the blessings of gurus and elders. It is important to listen to the reading of the almanac by spiritual scholars in temples on Tamil New Year's day, said B. Damodara Deekshithar. The almanac gives a sneak peek into what lies ahead.

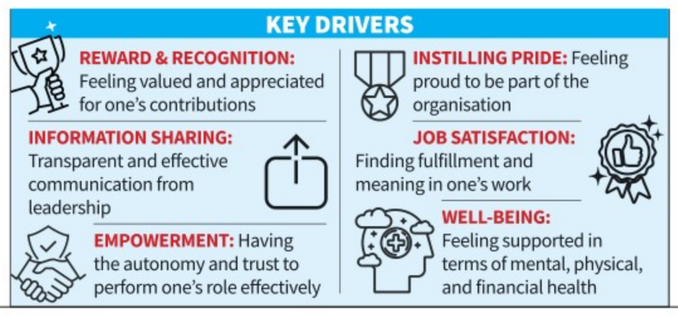
Our ancestors calculated time based on the movement of the stars and the planets, preparing the blueprint for the almanac. Five aspects are taken into consideration in preparing the *panchangam*. These are *tithi* (the movement of the moon vis-à-vis the sun and the intervening days between them), *vaaram* (seven days), the stars (numbering 27), *yogam* and *karanam* (12 hours in a day). Each of these aspects hold a clue to how the day would be. For example, during siddha yogam and amrita yogam on a given day, one can undertake auspicious activities but avoid them during the inauspicious marana yogam. By reading the almanac daily, one can have overcome ill health and achieve one's targets. At a wider level, the almanac also gives information on various aspects that impact one's daily life in a social context. Weather forecast, impending famine or war are all mentioned under various positions of the planets and the stars during various times of the year.

The new Tamil year, named Parabhava, augurs well for cows: they will flourish and the production of dairy products will be robust; due to good rainfall, farmers will reap good harvest. While those in governance will perform well, disruptions will also be a part of political life.

BEST PLACES TO WORK

At The Hindu Group, we believe that the future of business is deeply rooted in how organisations value their people. The Best Places to Work Awards 2026 reflect our commitment to shaping conversations beyond journalism — towards building workplaces that are inclusive, empowering, and driven by purpose. These awards celebrate organisations that don't just talk about culture, but actively live it every day

NAVANEETH L.V., CEO, The Hindu Group



Employee happiness is not a 'nice to have', it is a critical driver of productivity, retention, and long-term business success. Organisations that truly listen to their people and act on feedback are the ones that outperform

LORD MARK PRICE, Founder of WorkL

Employee feedback is now the gold standard for workplace excellence

The Hindu Best Places to Work Awards 2026, a partnership between The Hindu Group and WorkL, sets a new national standard by measuring workplace excellence by employee opinion over policy, affirming that people are the most critical asset for business success

To qualify for the awards, organisations had to reach an average workplace happiness score of 70% or above. REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO/ISTOCK

In an era of rapidly evolving workplace expectations, The Hindu Group (THG), in a landmark partnership with the global employee experience authority WorkL, has introduced the inaugural The Hindu Best Places to Work Awards 2026. This prestigious initiative marks a significant milestone, establishing a new national benchmark for organisational excellence and redefining what it means to be a truly great workplace in India. Drawing strong participation from companies across a multitude of sectors, the first edition highlights a growing consensus among business leaders: employee engagement, well-being, and a thriving culture are no longer peripheral concerns but are central drivers of sustainable business success.

This initiative signals The Hindu Group's commitment to extending its role beyond journalism and thought leadership to actively shaping the national conversation around workplace culture. By partnering with WorkL, the awards bring a robust, data-driven methodology to the forefront of evaluating workplace quality. This ensures that recognition is not awarded based on perception or self-nomination, but on the verified, confidential, and anonymous feedback of employees themselves.

Workers' well-being is no longer a peripheral concern, but is a key driver of business success

Enter Now!

Lord Mark Price, the founder of WorkL, emphasised the core philosophy behind the awards, stating, "Employee happiness is not a 'nice to have', it is a critical driver of productivity, retention, and long-term business success. Organisations that truly listen to their people and act on feedback are the ones that outperform." This perspective is the bedrock of the awards, reinforcing that true workplace excellence must be measured through the lived, daily experiences of the workforce, not merely by organisational intent or policies.

Navaneeth L.V., CEO, The Hindu Group, said The Hindu Group believes that the future of business is deeply rooted in how organisations value their people. "The awards reflect The Hindu Group's commitment to shaping conversations beyond journalism – towards building workplaces that are inclusive, empowering, and driven by purpose. These awards celebrate organisations that don't just talk about culture, but actively live it every day," Mr. Navaneeth said.

The methodology for identifying the winners is both rigorous and employee-first. To qualify, participating organisations had to achieve an average workplace happiness score of 70% or higher, while also meeting specific participation thresholds to ensure the data was statistically significant and representative of the workforce. This structured evaluation is built on WorkL's six core drivers of Workplace Happiness, a comprehensive framework that provides a holistic view of the employee experience. The first is 'reward and recognition' – employees should feel valued and appreciated for their contributions. Then comes information sharing, which translates to transparent and effective communication from leadership. Another determinant is empowerment – the autonomy and trust to perform one's role effectively. Other drivers are: pride in being part of the organisation, job satisfaction, and well-being.

To ensure fair and contextual benchmarking, organisations were assessed across four distinct size-based categories: Small (10-49 employees), Medium (50-249), Big (250-1,999), and Very Big (2,000+). Furthermore, the awards feature special categories that recognise progressive and inclusive practices, including 'Best for 18-34', honouring workplaces that attract young talent through purpose-driven work and autonomy; 'Best for Women', celebrating organisations that provide structural safety, life-cycle support, and equitable growth opportunities; and 'Best for Wellbeing', acknowledging companies that embed a holistic "people-first" philosophy into their core operations.

The inaugural edition of The Hindu Best Places to Work Awards sends a clear message to the Indian corporate landscape: workplace culture has become a boardroom priority. The organisations recognised are not just high performers in their respective industries; they are pioneers, setting the benchmark for the future of work in India and proving that investing in people is the most critical investment a business can make.

Winners of The Hindu Best Places to Work Awards 2026

The winners of *The Hindu* Best Places to Work Awards 2026 are...

AGODA: A global digital travel platform that empowers its employees with a culture of ownership, innovation, and trust. It fosters growth through internal mobility and cross-border collaboration while balancing high performance with robust mental health support and flexible work models

APTUS VALUE HOUSING FINANCE INDIA LTD.: A purpose-driven housing finance company that enables home-ownership for underserved families. Aptus has built a respectful, inclusive workplace with clear growth opportunities and a strong culture of recognition and feedback

AXIS BANK LIMITED: One of India's leading private sector banks, its 'Dil Se Open' philosophy shapes an inclusive and high-performance culture for over 100,000 employees. The bank invests heavily in continuous learning and structured talent programmes

CFOLOGIC: A global finance and CFO advisory firm that builds careers on early responsibility and real ownership. Its "Friends First, Colleagues Later" philosophy fosters a high-trust, collaborative environment for ambitious professionals

CLOUDTECHNER SERVICES PRIVATE LIMITED: A specialised IT services firm that blends high performance with empathy. Its culture is defined by psychological safety and open communication, treating employees as stakeholders in a shared vision

CREDITSPRING: A U.K.-founded fintech company that has built a high-growth, people-centric workplace where performance and purpose go hand in hand. The company empowers employees to grow with the business through continuous feedback and learning investments

LANDEED: A fast-growing Indian proptech company defined by a culture of ownership, speed, and purpose. It offers a high-growth environment with equity ownership and hands-on mentorship, encouraging employees to take bold decisions

MULTIPLIER BRAND SOLUTIONS PVT. LTD.: A leading marketing company whose values-led culture (REETTI) creates an environment where employees feel heard, valued, and empowered. The organisation is noted for its empathy and social responsibility

NEWCOLD BHARAT REEFER PRIVATE LIMITED: A leader in temperature-controlled logistics with a people-centric culture built on "head, hand, and heart". It fosters innovation and accountability while ensuring a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace

VOLUME: A boutique marketing agency where culture is intentionally crafted to blend ambition with empathy. In its close-knit environment, every voice matters, and employees are trusted with real ownership from the outset

ZYNERD: An education and research organisation that empowers its people with a culture of ownership, resilience, and continuous learning. Its "context over control" philosophy fosters trust and enables individuals to thrive without micromanagement

The winners of the inaugural Hindu Best Places to Work Awards 2026, powered by WorkL, are more than just recipients of an award; they are the standard-bearers of a new workplace paradigm in India.

These organisations have distinguished themselves through a data-driven, employee-validated process, demonstrating exceptional commitment to creating environments where individuals feel trusted, valued, and motivated.

Their success, measured through authentic employee feedback, elevates the very definition of workplace excellence.

The winning organisations have consistently scored high across WorkL's globally recognised framework, which measures everything from reward and recognition to empowerment, pride, and wellbeing. Their achievement reinforces a fundamental truth: a world-class culture cannot be constructed superficially but must be built and sustained through everyday practices that put people at the centre of business success.

When organisations prioritise their people, results are transformative – there is stronger talent retention, higher productivity, and enhanced innovation

Catalyst for success

The diversity of this year's winners demonstrates that workplace transformation is a cross-sector phenomenon. From technology and finance to marketing and logistics, these companies prove that a strategic focus on employee experience is a universal catalyst for success. They are living proof that when organisations prioritise their people, the results – stronger talent retention, higher productivity, and enhanced innovation – are transformative.

Honouring the highly commended organisations

In celebrating the winners of The Hindu Best Places to Work Awards 2026, special recognition is also merited for the organisations designated as "Highly Commended". These companies represent a powerful and growing movement across Indian industry, demonstrating a sustained and genuine commitment to building superior workplace environments.

Their inclusion on this list signifies that they have successfully cultivated cultures where employees feel valued, heard, and empowered. These organisations are distinguished by their ability to translate positive intent into meaningful action – they actively listen to their people, act on the feedback they receive, and embed people-first practices into their everyday operations and leadership styles.

The principles upheld by these organisations closely align with the core ethos of the awards, where excellence is anchored in an authentic employee experience shaped by trust, well-being, and a shared sense of purpose. By prioritising their people, these companies are not only fostering resilient and high-performing workforces, but are also setting meaningful benchmarks for others aspiring to build workplaces grounded in empathy and long-term engagement.

Together, these highly commended organisations exemplify how a deep-seated belief in putting people first fosters organisational success.

HIGHLY COMMENDED ORGANISATIONS

	ORGANISATION	SECTOR
1	IDFC First Bank	Private banking
2	Bandhan Bank	Private banking
3	State Bank of India	Public banking
4	Canara Bank	Public banking
5	Kotak Mahindra Bank	Private banking
6	ICICI Bank India	Private banking
7	Indian Bank	Public banking
8	Punjab National Bank	Public banking
9	AU Small Finance Bank	Small finance
10	HDFC Bank	Private banking
11	HSBC India	International banking
12	Standard Chartered India	International banking
13	Northern Trust India	Asset management
14	Jio Financial Services	Digital finance
15	Aditya Birla Capital	NBFC
16	Bajaj Finserv	NBFC
17	Muthoot Finance	NBFC
18	HDFC Life	Life insurance
19	ICICI Prudential Life	Life insurance
20	SBI Life Insurance	Life insurance
21	Tata AIA Life Insurance	Life insurance
22	Tata AIG	General insurance
23	ICICI Lombard	General insurance
24	Deloitte India	Consulting
25	Mphasis	IT services
26	Wipro India	IT services
27	Tech Mahindra	IT services
28	Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)	IT services
29	Cognizant India	IT services
30	Capgemini India	IT services
31	Coforge	IT services
32	EXL Service India	BPO/IT
33	Genpact India	BPO/IT
34	IBM India	Enterprise tech
35	Oracle India	Enterprise software
36	Google India	Internet services
37	Apple India	Hardware/Software
38	Samsung India	Consumer electronics
39	Dell Technologies India	Hardware
40	Antier Solutions	Blockchain
41	Sagility	Health tech
42	Tejas Networks	Networking
43	Airtel India	Telecom tech
44	Tata Steel India	Steel manufacturing
45	TVS Motor India	Auto manufacturing
46	Mahindra & Mahindra	Auto manufacturing
47	Ashok Leyland	Commercial vehicles
48	Jindal Steel	Steel manufacturing
49	Bajaj Auto	Two-wheelers
50	Honda India	Auto manufacturing
51	Larsen & Toubro India	Engineering
52	Mahindra Group	Diversified
53	Adani Energy Solutions	Power distribution
54	Cipla India	Pharmaceuticals
55	Dr Reddy's Laboratories India	Generics
56	Sun Pharma India	Pharmaceuticals
57	Torrent Pharma India	Pharmaceuticals
58	Serum Institute of India	Vaccines
59	Bharat Biotech	Vaccines
60	Apollo	Hospital chain
61	Biocon India	Biosimilars
62	Aizant	Pharma/Research
63	PharmEasy	Digital pharmacy
64	Reliance Retail	Organised retail
65	Flipkart	E-commerce
66	Myntra	Fashion e-commerce
67	Meesho	Social commerce
68	Pepsi Co India	Food & Beverages
69	Britannia Industries	Food & Beverages
70	Tata Consumer Products	Food & Beverages
71	Indus Towers	Telecom infra
72	Blue Dart Express	Express logistics
73	Air India	Aviation
74	Quess Corp	Staffing
75	Tata Consulting Engineers	Engineering consulting

INBRIEF

GAIL to invest ₹3,800 crore in building solar power projects

Expanding its renewable push, State-owned Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL) said it would be building 700 MW solar power projects in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra with an investment of ₹3,800 crore. GAIL would develop a 600 MW solar power project along with a 55 MWh battery energy storage system (BESS) at TUSCO Solar Park in Jhansi, U.P. Also, GAIL would set up a 100 MW solar power unit with 22 MWh BESS in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

Govt. amends pricing norms for lower-grade iron ore

The Ministry of Mines amended the pricing norms for lower grade of iron ore seeking to make extraction and utilisation by industries, such as steel, more economical. The government has done away with using an average selling price of higher grade of iron ore for levying royalty and auction premium. In a statement, the Ministry noted higher levy on the "grade below threshold value made the beneficiation of such minerals uneconomical."

Gold ETFs attract ₹31,561 cr. in March quarter amid conflict

Gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) witnessed an influx of ₹31,561 crore in the March quarter, marking an almost six-fold surge compared with the year-ago period, as investors sought the safety of the traditional safe-haven asset amid heightened geopolitical tensions. On a quarter-on-quarter basis, inflows rose 36% to ₹23,132 crore. Additionally, the asset base of gold ETFs, as well as investor accounts, recorded significant growth during the year. PTI

Auto wholesales log 2.83 cr. in FY26 as war casts shadow

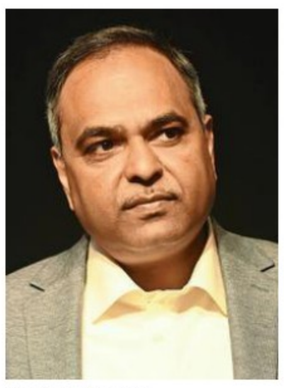
Domestic demand and macroeconomic fundamentals remain robust stepping into FY27, however, West Asia conflict situation needs close monitoring for any impact on production, says SIAM

Lalatendu Mishra
NEW DELHI

In FY26 wholesales of passenger vehicles (PV) stood at 46.43 lakh, a growth of 7.9%, commercial vehicles (CV) wholesales rose 12.6% to 10.80 lakh, three-wheelers (3W) at 8.36 lakh units were up 12.8% while two-wheeler (2W) wholesales were at 2.17 crore, up 10.7% over FY25. Total wholesales of all segments stood at almost 2.83 crore.

This was the highest ever wholesales in a financial year after seven years, as per Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) data. However, the outlook is clouded by the impact of war in West Asia.

"Though FY26 started modestly, the Indian Auto industry closed the year on a high note with every vehicle category together posting the highest-ever sales in a financial year, after seven years," said Shailesh Chandra, president, SIAM.


Shailesh Chandra

"The strong contributors to this growth have been the positive sentiments on GST 2.0 reforms and multiple repo rate cuts during the year," he said.

"Looking ahead, domestic demand and macroeconomic fundamentals remain robust as we step into FY27. However, uncertainties arising from the West Asia conflict need to be closely monitored as it may have an impact on production, commodity prices, fuel prices, freight rates and the overall economy."

On Q4FY26, Rajesh Menon, DG, SIAM said, "Each of the vehicle category posted the highest-ever sales in the January to March quarter with double digit growth compared to previous year's quarter."

Higher exports

Total automobile production in FY26 was 3,47,08,984 units. During the year, the PV segment saw the highest-ever exports of 9.05 lakh units, up 17.5%. The demand has been steady across most markets including in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America last year, SIAM said. The 2W segment also recorded the highest-ever exports in a financial year at 51.8 lakh, up 23.4%.

"Wider product range and recognition of Indian 2W brands and robust quality is increasing acceptance globally. Further, the depreciated value of rupee is also helping the exports volumes," SIAM said.

Exports of 3Ws grew 50.1% in FY26 to about 4.61 lakh. Increased exports to Sri Lanka and African nations contributed to this growth. As many as 0.95 lakh CVs were shipped, a growth of 17.4%. Neighbouring countries and the Middle East have been the steady markets for CVs.

While uncertainties from West Asia conflict, particularly over crude oil and commodity prices, are a concern, a stable geopolitical environment could help the industry post higher FY27 growth.

IMF cuts growth outlook, warns of recession

Reuters
WASHINGTON

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) cut its growth outlook on Tuesday due to Iran war-driven energy price spikes and supply disruptions and warned that the global economy would teeter on the brink of recession if the conflict worsens and oil stays above $100 per barrel through 2027.

With uncertainty over the Middle East conflict gripping finance, officials gathering for IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington, IMF presented three growth scenarios: weaker, worse and severe, depending on how the war unfolds.

The World Economic Outlook's most optimistic "reference scenario" assumes a short-lived Iran war and forecasts 3.1% real GDP growth for 2026, down 0.2 percentage point from its previous forecast in January.

And the IMF's worst-case "severe scenario" assumes an extended and deepening conflict and much higher oil prices that prompt major financial market dislocations and tighter financial conditions, slashing global growth to 2.0%.

"This would mean a close call for a global recession," the IMF said, adding growth has been below that level only four times since 1980 – with the last two severe recessions in 2009.

'Danish firms shifting out of China prefer India'

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Many Danish firms prefer India as an alternative to China rather than other South East Asian competitors such as Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines, Søren Holm Johansen, chairman of the India Denmark Chamber of Commerce said in an interview.

Søren Holm Johansen

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Johansen explained the biggest draw for Danish companies to India is the talent pool available here. The Indian Danish Chamber of Commerce in Denmark announced the establishment of its New Delhi chapter on Wednesday.

"Talent is a very, very important resource that India provides and which has become more and more important for Danish companies for not only the Indian, but to a large extent, global activities that Danish companies are involved with," Mr. Johansen said.

Prefer India

He explained engineering and information technology were the two largest sectors that Danish firms availed of Indian talent but added human resource management and general back office support was another area where Indian talent was also preferred.

"There's also a lot of Danish companies that have indicated that part of China plus one strategy, that India is one of the preferred locations for Danish companies that have been in China for many years and are looking to move out," Mr. Johansen said.

'Very, very, attractive'

"You can say there is a competition with other Southeast Asian countries, particularly Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines," he added. "But India is, given its history, its language and the talent pool, very, very attractive, both as a market for the global scene, but also, with the growing wealth of India, as a local market."

Trinity of features

Overall, Mr. Johansen said that India has a very compelling trinity of features that is attractive to Danish companies.

"You have the talent pool, you have the local market, and you have the opportunity to use India as an export hub," he said.

"We see some companies utilising all those different areas. So, I think that sort of trinity is very important as a Danish company to look at," said Mr. Johansen

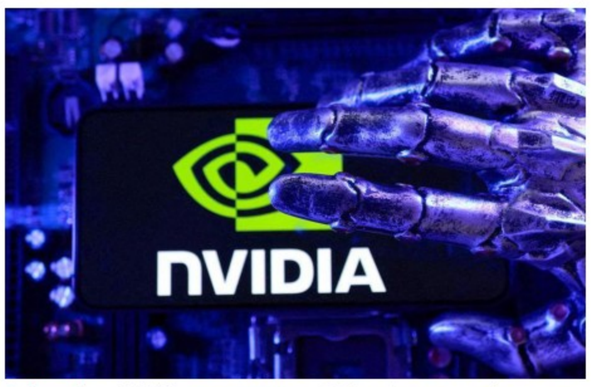
Nvidia enters cloud gaming space in India; sets April 16 for introduction

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Nvidia is introducing GeForce Now cloud gaming subscription service in India on April 16, years after the GPU maker first announced the service's rollout in the country.

Cloud gaming allows players to stream PC games to local devices, allowing them to access large, resource-heavy games on devices that may not have the storage or hardware capable of playing those games.

GeForce Now comes as another heavyweight enters the Indian market – Xbox Cloud Gaming by Microsoft – betting on Indian users' appetite for high-end gaming. Nvidia will use RTX 5080 GPUs to run games for users, with a maximum bitrate of 100 megabits per second, and server infrastructure based in Mumbai. JioCloudGaming is the other major player in the market.


Price point: Nvidia's entry comes as GPU and memory prices skyrocket, leading to price hikes for PC builders. REUTERS

Nvidia's entry comes as GPU and memory prices skyrocket, leading to price hikes for PC builders across the board.

GeForce Now has a small library of games that users can play for free, with a broader catalogue playable if users have purchased those select games on storefronts like Steam, Epic Games and Xbox's PC games store.

Internet test

Unlike multiplayer games, where servers exchange a minimal amount of data between players – and let the consumers' devices do the heavy lifting of rendering the graphics of other players' actions – cloud gaming requires enormous, stable bandwidth to render every frame of playback remotely.

Since an entire high-quality stream is being played to users in real time, the best possible cloud gaming experience needs a wired ethernet connection with high speed home broadband.

POSPs emerging as vital link in expanding insurance access

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

As economic growth shifts towards Tier 2 and smaller cities in India, financial products distribution is adopting newer formats.

In many parts of the country, insurance is transitioning from a conversation-led product to an assisted sales model, with point of sale persons (POSPs) emerging as an important part of the distribution ecosystem in markets where the agency system and bancassurance have limited presence.

The importance of such models is underscored by the complexity of insurance products. With over 1,200 life insurance products and more than 2,000 general and health offerings in the market, customers often rely on intermediaries to navigate purchase, servicing and claims processes, POSPs are emerging as a vital link in expanding insurance access as well as to facilitate financial wellness, according to industry officials.

Clients rely on intermediaries to navigate buying insurance

Financial inclusion

Their role is also being viewed alongside broader financial inclusion efforts, with potential synergies with banking correspondents to deliver a wider suite of services at the grassroots level.

A study by Redseer suggests assisted distribution continues to dominate insurance sales in India, accounting for over 95% of overall transactions.

Non-insurer-led channels contribute significant share of gross direct premium income across motor, health and life segments.

'Oil shock may cut growth by 0.8% but India can handle'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

India's fundamentals are in a good place to take the blow from the oil shock, said S&P in a statement.

The stress test conducted by the financial services firm found for an oil price that averages $130/barrel in 2026 and at about $100/barrel in 2027, economic growth could slow by up to 80 basis points (bps) from its base case of 7.1% in fiscal 2027 (ending March 31, 2027). The earlier base case was oil price of $85/barrel for Brent oil for the rest of 2026 and $70/barrel for 2027.

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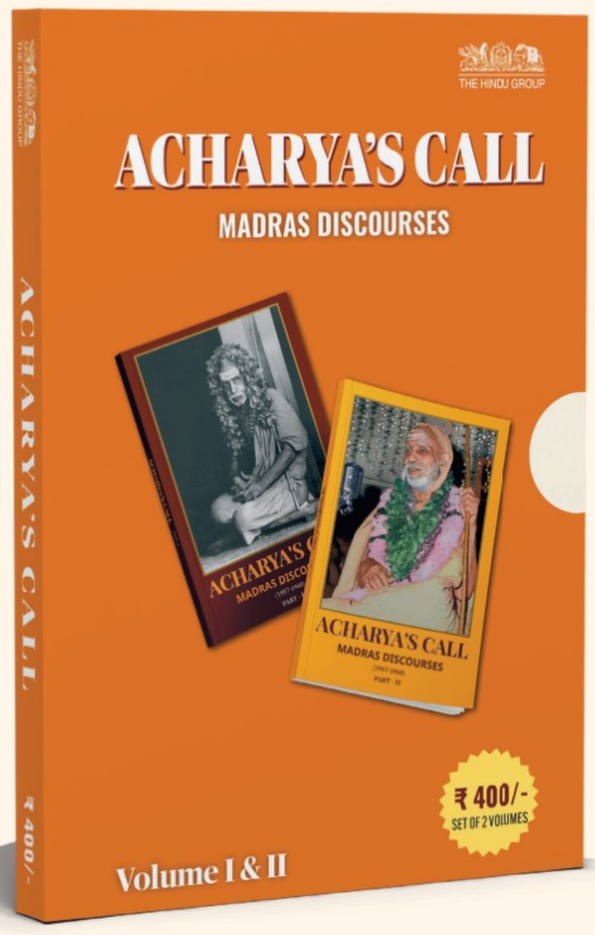
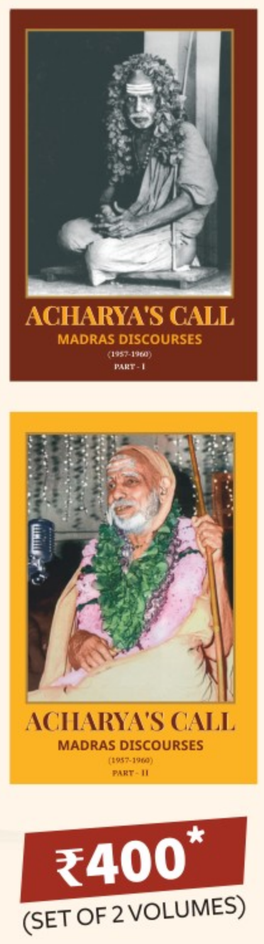
NEW ARRIVAL





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The Hindu presents *Acharya's Call*, a two-volume collection of the sermons by His Holiness Shri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathy Shankaracharya Swamigal, the revered Maha Periyava of Kanchi.

These speeches, delivered in Madras between 1957 and 1960, were originally reported in *The Hindu* and later published as books in 1968 and 1995.

The wide-ranging Madras discourses are now republished by *The Hindu*. The collection also includes a report of an interview granted by His Holiness to Hajime Nakamura, Professor of Indian Philosophy, Tokyo.

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DHAKA

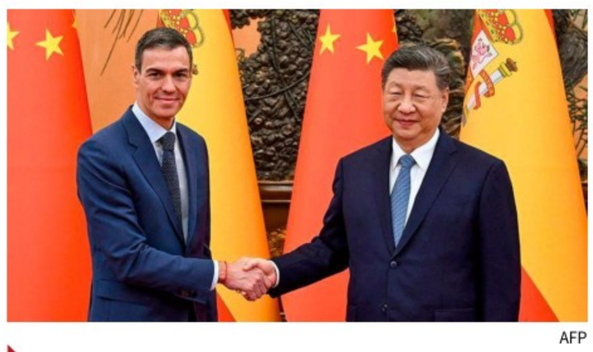
About 250 feared missing after boat capsizes in Andaman Sea: UN

FILE PHOTO

About 250 people, including children, were feared missing after a boat carrying Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals capsized in the Andaman Sea, the United Nations said on Tuesday. "The trawler, which departed from Teknaf in Bangladesh and was on its way to Malaysia, reportedly sank due to heavy winds." AFP

BEIJING

Xi calls for closer economic ties with Spain in face of global 'chaos'

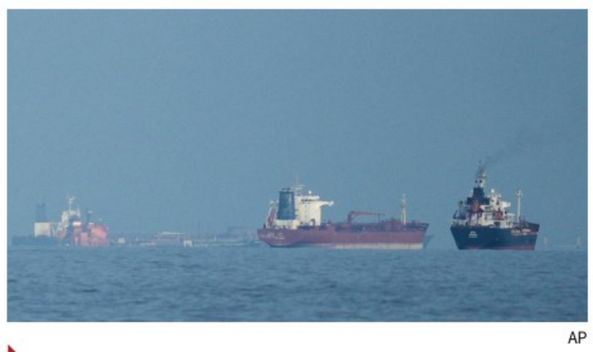


AFP

China's President Xi Jinping warned against a return to the "law of the jungle" in international relations and called for closer economic ties with Spain as he met Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Tuesday, according to Chinese state media. The meeting in Beijing came on the second day of Sanchez's visit to China. AFP

WASHINGTON

U.S. to allow waiver on Iran oil to expire, say administration sources



AP

The Trump administration will allow a 30-day waiver of sanctions on Iranian oil at sea to expire later this week, two administration officials said on Tuesday. The move signals that "Treasury is going full force on Economic Fury," on Iran, an apparent reference to Operation Epic Fury, the U.S.-led military campaign. REUTERS

ROME

Italy pauses defence cooperation deal with Israel, says PM Meloni

AP

Italy has decided to suspend the automatic renewal of a defence cooperation deal with Israel, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said on Tuesday, citing the conflicts in West Asia. Ms. Meloni's right-wing government has been one of Israel's closest allies in Europe, but in recent weeks it has criticised Israeli attacks on Lebanon. REUTERS

Efforts under way for second set of U.S.-Iran talks as fragile truce holds

First talks were part of an ongoing diplomatic process rather than a one-off effort, say Pak. officials; second round is likely to be held this week; *Rich Starry,* a tanker owned by a Chinese company and sanctioned by U.S., crosses the Strait of Hormuz

Associated Press
ISLAMABAD

The standoff between the United States and Iran deepened on Tuesday as the U.S. declared it had blockaded Iran's ports, Tehran threatened to strike targets across the region, and Pakistan said it was racing to bring the sides together for more talks.

Though last week's ceasefire appeared to hold, the showdown over the Strait of Hormuz risked reigniting hostilities and deepening the regional war's economic fallout.

Talks aimed at permanently ending the conflict – which began February 28 with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran – failed to produce an agreement last weekend, though Pakistan has proposed hosting a second round in the coming days.

Hopeful sequel: A security guard stands atop the Serena Hotel, the venue where Iran and U.S. held peace talks earlier in Islamabad. AFP

Two Pakistani officials said the first talks were part of an ongoing diplomatic process rather than a one-off effort.

Two U.S. officials said on Monday that discussions were still under way about a new round of talks. A diplomat from one of the mediating countries said Tehran and Washington had agreed to it.

The talks could happen on Thursday, according to the U.S. officials. The location, timing and composition of the delegations had not been decided, although Islamabad and Geneva are being considered as host cities.

The blockade is intended to pressure Iran, which has exported millions of barrels of oil, mostly to Asia, since the war began. The blockade of Iranian ports involves more than 10,000 military personnel, more than a dozen warships and dozens of aircraft, U.S. Central Command said.

At least three ships sailing from Iranian ports crossed the Hormuz Strait despite the blockade, but some vessels taking the route later turned back, maritime tracking data indicated. They were among at least seven Iran-linked vessels that passed through the strait after the blockade came into effect, according to maritime data provider Kpler.

A Chinese tanker, the *Rich Starry*, also crossed the strait overnight from Monday to Tuesday via the Iranian-approved vetting route south of Larak Island. Kpler said that vessel was carrying 31,500 tonnes of methanol and was bound for Sohar in Oman, according to data from its transponder. It turned around while in the Gulf of Oman on Tuesday and headed back up towards the strait.

The *Rich Starry* is listed by the United States' Office of Foreign Assets Control as being sanctioned for ties to Iran.

China calls U.S. blockade of Iran ports 'dangerous'

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

China accused the United States on Tuesday of "dangerous and irresponsible" behaviour over its blockade of Iranian ports, with President Xi Jinping vowing Beijing would play a "constructive role" in promoting peace in the West Asia.

U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to sink ships entering or leaving Iranian ports and coastal areas in the Gulf after peace talks between Washington and Tehran failed over the weekend.

The blockade came into force at 1400 GMT on Monday, despite the United States and Iran agreeing to a fragile two-week ceasefire days earlier.

"The U.S. increased military deployments and took a targeted blockade action, which will only exacerbate tensions and undermine the already fragile ceasefire agreement and further jeopardise safety of passage through the Strait [of Hormuz]," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a news conference. "This is dangerous and irresponsible behaviour," he added.

Guo Jiakun

Iran has effectively closed the vital Strait of Hormuz, allowing only vessels serving countries it deems friendly – such as China – to cross.

Mr. Trump's blockade, analysts say, aims to starve Iran of funds and pressure Beijing, the biggest buyer of Iranian oil, to push Tehran to open the strait, through which one-fifth of global oil transits in peacetime.

Tehran's ambassador to the United Nations called Mr. Trump's blockade a "grave violation" of Iran's sovereignty.

Speaking publicly about the war for the first time, Mr. Xi echoed those warnings, calling for the national sovereignty of countries in the West Asia and the Gulf to be "respected".

China also took a firm stance on Tuesday against Mr. Trump's threats to impose new tariffs on Chinese products entering the U.S. following reports Beijing was supplying or intends to supply weapons to Iran.

Mr. Trump had said he would hit China's goods with a 50% tariff if it provided military assistance to Tehran.

Carney gets majority after three special election wins

Associated Press
TORONTO

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney returns to Parliament on Tuesday with more power after he secured a majority government by sweeping three special elections.

Mr. Carney's Liberals now have 174 of the 343 seats in the House of Commons and won't need support from Opposition parties to pass legislation after winning three districts that became vacant after last year's election.

Mr. Carney's government is the first in Canada's history to switch from a minority to a majority between national elections.

The Liberal Party could stay in power until 2029 after Monday's results.

"Voters have placed their trust in our new government's plan. We accept that support with humility, determination and a clear understanding of what this moment demands," Mr. Carney said in a post on social media.

Mark Carney

Mr. Carney won Canada's election last year, fuelled by public anger over U.S. President Donald Trump's annexation threats, and he has vowed to reduce Canada's reliance on the U.S.

Since then, five defections from Opposition parties, including four from the main Opposition Conservative party, put Mr. Carney's Liberals on the cusp of the majority.

One of those defectors referenced Mr. Carney's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, as helping in his decision. In that speech, Mr. Carney condemned economic coercion by great powers against smaller countries and received widespread praise for his remarks.

Mr. Carney, the former head of the Bank of England as well as Canada's central bank, has moved the Liberals to the centre-right since replacing Justin Trudeau as PM in 2025.

Nelson Wiseman, professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, said Mr. Trump has been a major factor in Mr. Carney's rise to Prime Minister, but his performance on the world stage has only added to his popularity.

Gone too soon

A relative mourns over the body of three-year-old Yahya al-Malahi, who was killed in an Israeli strike, ahead of her funeral in Gaza City on Tuesday. Gaza's civil defence agency said four persons, one of them a toddler, were killed in the northern part of the Palestinian territory. AFP

Lebanon and Israel hold direct talks in decades

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

Lebanon and Israel opened their first direct diplomatic talks in decades on Tuesday in Washington following more than a month of war between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio calling it a "historic opportunity".

Mr. Rubio said the Trump administration is "very happy" to be facilitating the discussions, while noting that "we understand we're working against decades of history and complexities" that will not be quickly resolved.

Hezbollah opposes the direct talks and was not represented, while the Iranian-backed group appeared to step up its fire on northern Israel.

West Asia war threatens to push 2.5 mn into poverty: UNDP

Press Trust of India
UNITED NATIONS

The conflict and military escalation in West Asia threatens to push 2.5 million people in India into poverty and the country is projected to experience some loss in its human development progress, according to estimates and projections by the United Nations.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in a report titled 'Military Escalation In The Middle East: Human Development Impacts Across Asia And The Pacific' noted that the conflict is "widening human development pressures across Asia and the Pacific. Through higher fuel, freight, and input costs, the shock is diminishing household purchasing power, raising food insecurity, straining public budgets, and weakening livelihoods".

The preliminary assessment, issued on Tuesday, estimates that globally 8.8 million people are at risk of falling into poverty and the West Asia military escalation could cost Asia-Pacific up to $299 billion.

In India, poverty is expected to rise from around 4,00,000 to 2.5 million, the report said. It added that the number of people pushed into poverty in the world as a result of the conflict rises from approximately 1.9 million to nearly 8.8 million across scenarios, with South Asia accounting for the largest share, ranging from about 1.7 million to over 8 million, reflecting both the subregion's population size and its higher exposure to income and price shocks. China is estimated to experience a more moderate increase in the number of people at risk of falling into poverty, from around 1,15,000 to over 6,20,000, reflecting small proportional changes applied to a very large population base.

The preliminary assessment estimates that globally 8.8 mn people are at risk of falling into poverty

Highlighting the estimated poverty impact of the military escalation, the report said that India's poverty rate is estimated to rise to 24.2% post-crisis from 23.9%, pushing 24,64,698 people into poverty.

An estimated 35,40,33,698 people are projected to live in poverty in the country post-crisis as compared to 35,15,69,000 pre-crisis.

The UNDP simulation estimates the impact of the conflict on the Human Development Index (HDI) for countries across the region. It indicates that Iran's HDI could decline by an amount equivalent to roughly one to one and a half years of human development progress.

"India is projected to experience a loss of approximately 0.03-0.12 years of HDI progress," it said.

The report notes that among the region's larger importers, India meets over 90% of its oil needs through imports, sourcing more than 40% of crude imports and 90% of LPG imports from West Asia.

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OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, M&H, Div.-Kota
No. 52 Date 08-04-2026

Notice Inviting Bid No. 01/2026-27

Bids for 01 (One Nos.) Work are invited from interested bidders upto 06:00 PM dated 30.04.2026 Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.raj.nic.in) of the state and M&H departmental website. The approximate value of the procurement is Rs. 500.00 Lacs.

Executive Engineer
M&H, Div.-Kota

DIPR/C/6753/2026

TAKING ADVANTAGE

The ball was not coming on to the bat, says Super Kings' Noor

R. RAGU

First of all, really happy to contribute to my team. The ball was not coming really well on to the bat; it was good to take advantage of that. Yeah, I will keep putting in the effort to contribute in the coming matches — Chennai Super Kings left-arm wrist-spinner Noor Ahmad on the victory over Kolkata Knight Riders.

IN AND OUT

Sunrisers name Madushanka as injury replacement for Carse

FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Sunrisers Hyderabad picked Dilshan Madushanka as a replacement for Brydon Carse for the remainder of IPL 2026. Carse has been ruled out of the season due to an injury. He will join SRH for ₹75 lakh. The Sri Lankan left-arm pacer was previously a part of Mumbai Indians in the IPL.

BACKING CLASS

Moody confident misfiring Pooran will get going soon

ANI

Nicholas Pooran is fully aware of the slow start he's had. But we've got 100% confidence in what he brings to the table. Class is permanent and I'm sure that the opportunity on Wednesday, at a venue where top-order players can enjoy, could well be the tonic that he needs — Lucknow Super Giants' Tom Moody.

HIGH PRAISE

Shami has got great wisdom and good leadership qualities: Moody

AP

(Mohammed) Shami has been terrific. He's our spearhead. He's got great wisdom, good leadership characteristics and he's bringing all of that to the table. What makes him good is his durability and ability to swing the ball early. He's bowling in the high 130s, which is as good as it has been throughout his career — Tom Moody.

Samson, Brevis and Noor on song as CSK notches up second win in a row

Mhatre, the No. 3 batter, plays his part with a 17-ball 38 for the home team; the spinners choke the Knight Riders batters in their pursuit of 193

IPL-19

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
CHENNAI

Like a restored Swiss watch, Chennai Super Kings ticked, getting the timing right again at Chepauk as it clinched a second straight win, beating Kolkata Knight Riders by 32 runs in IPL 2026 here on Tuesday.

Defending 192 under lights, CSK applied the classic Chepauk spin-choke. KKR was made to work for every boundary, with the asking rate nudging up incrementally until the chase slipped out of reach.

Like a metronome finding its beat after a stutter, Noor Ahmad's rhythm returned, and with it, the steady ticking of wickets. He struck twice in two balls – Ajinkya Rahane (28) miscuing a googly to hole out, and Cameron Green (nought) having his stumps rattled. Later, he dangled a carrot outside off, luring Rinku Singh (six) into a catch at long-on to finish with three for 21.

Akeal Hosein (one for 26), for his part, had Angkrish Raghuvanshi (27) caught in the deep. CSK was sloppy on the field, though, dropping three catches.

Earlier, Sanju Samson, Ayush Mhatre, and Dewald Brevis fired like sawn-off shotguns in short bursts as CSK posted 192 for five.

After Ruturaj Gaikwad's early exit, Mhatre (38, 17, 6x4, 2x6) made sure the PowerPlay was box office. It was T20 batting on a sugar rush, at Dash Parr pace. KKR had to bear the unhesitant, lucid cold-fury of his hitting, especially against Green and Vaibhav Arora. Five fours and two sixes rained off Mhatre's bat in a bitter, pestilential, and soul-straining way for them.

Meanwhile, Samson (48, 32b, 4x4, 3x6) got CSK off to a sparkling start.

He hit three consecutive fours off the first three balls off Vaibhav – two cut, one edged. He also smashed a straight six off Anukul Roy. CSK finished with 72 for two in the PowerPlay.

Beyond the PowerPlay, he cut and bashed to long-off for a couple of sixes off Kartik Tyagi.

Post Samson's departure, bowled off Tyagi, Brevis (41, 29b, 4x4, 2x6) helped CSK propel ahead. He went 360 – lofting Sunil Narine over long-on for a four, carving Varun Chakaravarthy through cover and point for fours, then muscling Vaibhav over fine leg and mid-on for sixes, before backing away to pierce extra cover again for a four off Narine.

The CSK bowlers did the rest.

Highlights: Samson got Super Kings off to a flier while Brevis ensured the home team reached 192 for five. Noor, who found his rhythm again, dismissed Green for a golden duck and pegged Knight Riders back in their chase. R. RAGU

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Sanju Samson b Tyagi 48 *(32b, 4x4, 3x6)*, Ruturaj Gaikwad c Powell b Anukul 7 *(6b, 1x4)*, Ayush Mhatre c Ramandeep b Vaibhav 38 *(17b, 6x4, 2x6)*, Dewald Brevis c Vaibhav b Tyagi 41 *(29b, 4x4, 2x6)*, Sarfaraz Khan b Narine 23 *(18b, 1x4, 2x6)*, Shivam Dube (not out) 13 *(12b, 1x4)*, Jamie Overton (not out) 7 *(6b, 1x4)*; Extras (lb-4, w-11): 15; Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 192.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-25 (Ruturaj, 2.2 overs), 2-72 (Mhatre, 5.6), 3-111 (Samson, 11.2), 4-162 (Sarfaraz, 16.1), 5-171 (Brevis, 17.3).

KNIGHT RIDERS BOWLING
Vaibhav 4-0-55-1, Green 2-0-30-0, Anukul 3-0-21-1, Narine 4-0-21-1, Varun 3-0-26-0, Tyagi 4-0-35-2.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS
Finn Allen **(Impact Player for Varun)** c Dube b Kamboj 1 *(3b)*, Sunil Narine c Gurjapneet b Khaleel 24 *(17b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Ajinkya Rahane c Ruturaj b Noor 28 *(22b, 2x6)*, Angkrish Raghuvanshi c Brevis b Akeal 27 *(19b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Rinku Singh c Dube b Noor 6 *(12b)*, Cameron Green b Noor 0 *(1b)*, Rovman Powell (not out) 31 *(22b, 1x4, 2x6)*, Ramandeep Singh c Sarfaraz b Kamboj 35 *(23b, 4x4, 1x6)*, Anukul Roy (not out) 1 *(1b)*; Extras (lb-2, w-5): 7; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 160.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-13 (Allen, 1.4), 2-29 (Narine, 4.2), 3-79 (Raghuvanshi, 9.3), 4-85 (Ajinkya, 10.5), 5-85 (Green, 10.6), 6-90 (Rinku, 12.5), 7-153 (Ramandeep, 19.3).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING
Khaleel 3.5-0-24-1, Kamboj 4-0-32-2, Akeal **(Impact Player for Mhatre)** 4-0-26-1, Noor 4-0-21-3, Gurjapneet 1.1-0-23-0, Overton 3-0-32-0.

Toss: KKR; **PoM:** Noor.
Super Kings won by 32 runs.

Next assignment

KKR: April 17 vs. GT
Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.

CSK: April 18 vs. SRH
Hyderabad, 7.30 p.m.

Chatter before matter: LSG strategy coach Williamson and captain Pant catch up with RCB star Kohli. K. MURALI KUMAR

RCB batters pose LSG the toughest test yet

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

In-form Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to make the most of its return to home environs when it takes on Lucknow Super Giants at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Wednesday.

The clash will be the first of three consecutive IPL games in the Garden City over the next 10 days, and having already won its two fixtures here, RCB would want to continue in the same vein and maximise its opportunities.

Added motivation

Rajat Patidar & Co. will also have the added motivation of dishing out fine performances, for the defending champion's Bengaluru leg in the league stage will end with these three matches.

Sunday's 18-run win away at Mumbai Indians should augur well. The batting came good again, as RCB posted 240 - its fourth 200-plus total in as many matches.

Krunal Pandya then bowled four miserly overs for 26 runs and a wicket to keep a capable MI batting line-up under check.

The only concerns from that contest were Virat Kohli's troublesome ankle and pacer Rasikh Salam pulling up thrice in a single over.

But those fears were allayed during practice on Tuesday when Kohli batted and Rasikh bowled.

LSG has triumphed in its previous two visits here, but to even compete this time, its batting should fire. Rishabh Pant's outfit has taken first strike twice this campaign, but made scores of just 141 and 164, and lost both matches.

Nicholas Pooran has had an underwhelming season, totalling just 41 runs. If he can summon the spirit which helped him score a mesmerising 19-ball 62 in LSG's one-wicket win at the Chinnaswamy in 2023, it will be timely.

The LSG bowling has largely held up well, with veteran Mohammed Shami still in fine fettle. But it will face its toughest test yet against RCB's marauding willow-wielders at one of the best venues for batting.

Today's match

RCB vs. LSG

Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 6
RCB 4 | LSG 2

PREVIOUS MEETING
RCB won by **six wickets**, 2025

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

Points table

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	5	4	1	0	8	0.889
Punjab Kings	4	3	0	1	7	0.720
Royal Challengers	4	3	1	0	6	1.148
Sunrisers Hyderabad	5	2	3	0	4	0.576
Delhi Capitals	4	2	2	0	4	0.322
Gujarat Titans	4	2	2	0	4	-0.029
Lucknow Super Giants	4	2	2	0	4	-0.427
Chennai Super Kings	5	2	3	0	4	-0.846
Mumbai Indians	4	1	3	0	2	-0.772
Kolkata Knight Riders	5	0	4	1	1	-1.383

Praful, Sakib and their MRF Pace Foundation link

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Praful Hinge and Sakib Hussain became overnight sensations as they scalped four wickets each on debut to script a 57-run win for Sunrisers Hyderabad against Rajasthan Royals in Hyderabad on Monday.

Incidentally, both pacers owe a lot to their stints at the MRF Pace Foundation here under Australia legend Glenn McGrath, which Praful acknowledged after receiving the Player-of-the-Match award.

"When he first came in 2023, he had some technical flaws because of which he had a back injury. We focused on correcting that and sent him back to Vidarbha fully fit. The following year, we refined his skills, including adapting to different formats... he had a strong season in under-23 cricket and even made his senior debut that year," said M. Senthilnathan, head coach at the MRF Pace Foundation.

"One of his strengths is that he has strong control over his line and length and can get the ball to shape. If you can move the ball from that length at his pace of 135 kph, it becomes difficult for the batters," he added. "He was not using his front arm enough and was trying to muscle the ball. When you do that, you fall over, and then the lateral reflex happens, causing an injury."

In 2024, Praful travelled to Brisbane as part of the exchange programme with Cricket Australia to train at the High Performance Centre.

On Sakib Hussain, Senthilnathan added: "He is an exciting prospect as he has raw pace. He comes from a humble background in Bihar, and he trained here in 2023-24. In the subsequent year, he got picked by Kolkata Knight Riders, and it's good to see him do well."

"Even Eshan Malinga has trained at MRF. So seeing these youngsters do well will inspire many of the current trainees. They might have been roommates with these players, and it will give them confidence to see their peers do well," the former India u-19 skipper said.

Putting their hand up: Praful and Sakib's debut exploits have made them the talk of the town. NAGARA GOPAL

Sindarov emerges the challenger to Gukesh; Vaishali stays on course

CANDIDATES CHESS

Sports Bureau

Javokhir Sindarov won the Candidates chess tournament with a round to spare, earning the right to challenge D. Gukesh for the World title. The 20-year-old Uzbek will take on the World champion from Chennai later this year.

He had begun the penultimate round, at Pegeia (Cyprus), needing just a draw from Anish Giri, his only rival who had any hope of stopping him.

With the draw, Sindarov took his tally to 9.5 points to retain his two-point lead going into the final round.

He had surprised many by winning the World Cup in Goa a few months ago. Still, few would have expected him to be so dominant in such a strong Candidates tournament.

The Women's Candidates, however, is heading for an exciting finish. R. Vaishali is still in joint lead with 7.5 points, after drawing with Tang Zhoyi, with Bibisara Assaubayeva, who scored a crucial victory against Anna Muzychuk.

Vaishali's fellow overnight leader Zhu Jiner suffered a setback, losing to Aleksandra Goryachkina. She has seven points.

All the best! Anish congratulates Sindarov on his qualification. FIDE

The results (13th round): Wei Yi (Chn) 6.5 bt Andrey Esipenko (Rus) 4.5; Anish Giri (Ned) 7.5 drew with Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb) 9.5; Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 6 drew with Matthias Bluebaum (Ger) 6; Fabiano Caruana (USA) 6.5 drew with R. Praggnanandhaa 5.5.

Women: Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz) 7.5 bt Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 6.5; Kateryna Lagno (Rus) 6.5 bt Divya Deshmukh 5; Tan Zhongyi (Chn) 5.5 drew with R. Vaishali 7.5; Zhu Jiner (Chn) 7 lost to Aleksandra Goryachkina (Rus) 6.5.

INBRIEF

Dominant Uttar Pradesh boys clinch sub-junior Natl. crown

Uttar Pradesh Hockey clinched the title at the 16th Hockey India sub-junior men's National championship in Rajgir (Bihar) with a 5-2 win over Hockey Madhya Pradesh in the final. Skipper Ketan Kushwaha led from the front, setting the tone with a goal in the fourth minute.

The result (final): Uttar Pradesh 5 (Ketan Kushwaha 4, Nitish Yadav 13-pc, Ali Shahrukh 28, Rajbhar Prahlad 35, Chauhan Raghvendra Singh 40) bt Hockey Madhya Pradesh 2 (Gazee Khan 8, Ayush Singh Lodhi 43).

Russia blanks Young Tigresses in under-17 women's friendly

The India under-17 women's team suffered a 0-3 defeat against host Russia in the second of three friendly matches in Sochi on Tuesday.

The result: Russia 3 (Sofia Svyatnaya 18, Valeria Menyailova 49, 52) bt India 0.

Vishesh takes first day's honours at Boulders Classic

The 19-year-old Vishesh Sharma of Hyderabad fired a seven-under 65 to take a one-shot lead in the opening round of the inaugural ₹1 crore Boulders Classic in Hyderabad on Tuesday. Vishesh's score, a new course record, featured an eagle on the par-5 14th, six birdies, and a lone bogey. Shubhankar Sharma carded a six-under 66 to be second along with Vinay Kumar Yadav.

Samson and Kerr win ICC Player-of-the-Month awards

Sanju Samson was on Tuesday named ICC Men's Player-of-the-Month for March, capping a stellar run that saw him play a defining role in the team's triumphant T20 World Cup campaign. New Zealand captain Melie Kerr won women's honour for the third time, after an outstanding series against Zimbabwe and South Africa. "Winning the ICC Player of the Month award is an incredible feeling, especially as it comes during what has been the most unforgettable phase of my cricketing journey. Playing a part in India's triumph at the T20 World Cup was truly a dream realised," Samson said.

LIVE TELECAST

ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 7.30 p.m.
IPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.
Champions League: Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 & LIV, 12.30 a.m. (Thursday)

Vishvanath determined to make CWG, Asiad squads

The 21-year-old, who won the 50kg title at the Asian championships, is working towards gaining weight and qualifying for the 55kg category; the Chennai lad's aim is to win gold at the LA Games

BOXING

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Vishvanath Suresh, the newly-crowned Asian boxing champion in 50kg at Ulaanbaatar, is ready to go up to 55kg in order to make it to the Indian teams for the Commonwealth and the Asian Games.

A World youth champion in 2022 and an Asian under-22 champion in 2024, Vishvanath, a product of the Army Sports Institute (ASI), Pune, waited for his time to compete at the elite level.

Satisfying verdict: Vishvanath says the win over World champion Tashkenbay at the Asians gave him a lot of confidence. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Breaking the drought

"I was No. 2 in my weight in the Services team and the No.1 boxer went to the National championships. After regular training, I did some extra work, which helped me. I got a chance and won the National title (in January last).

The Asian championships was my first major event. In the past few years, India didn't have an Asian champion (in men's boxing). Now I've become one," Vishvanath told *The Hindu*.

"My one-sided quarterfinal win over World champion Sanzhar Tashkenbay was satisfying. The Kazakh fell off a punch in the last round. No Indian had beaten him after Amit Panghal (in the 2024 Strandja tournament). That gave me a lot of confidence."

The 21-year-old is delighted to have made his boxer father M. Suresh, who bagged junior medals in the Nationals in the mid-1990s before hanging up his gloves to support his family, super proud.

Now the Chennai boy faces the challenge of going up to an Olympic weight, 55kg, for the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games.

"Life is incomplete without challenges. My first target is assessment (to get selected). My body weight stays around 54kg. It will be advantageous as I can eat a bit and box. All eyes will be on me. But my hard work will keep me ahead. I need to increase my strength for 55kg."

Vishvanath's ultimate aim is to shine at the Los Angeles Olympic Games.

"I want to win a gold in the Olympics, not just any medal. Vijender Singh's bronze in 2008 inspires me, but it's a shame that we've not won an Olympics medal (in men's boxing) since then. I want to change Indians' mindset," said Vishvanath.

New approach: Stokes says he and coach McCullum will work together in a slightly different way this season. FILE PHOTO

Talk of rift with McCullum a 'massive overstatement': Stokes

CRICKET

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

England cricket captain Ben Stokes has dismissed suggestions of a collapse in his relationship with coach Brendon McCullum, although he says the way they work together will "look a little bit different" this season.

Stokes and McCullum, a former New Zealand captain, have been in a close alliance since joining forces in 2022. But there appeared to be a difference in their respective approaches as England slumped to a 1-4 series Ashes loss in Australia.

Stokes opted for a more grinding, disciplined approach, as the series wore on, McCullum continued to stand by his mantra of ultra-aggressive Bazball cricket.

Both men backed each other in public and Stokes reiterated that position following media reports a post-Ashes review had revealed tensions between the duo. "Saying we weren't aligned, I think, is a massive overstatement," Stokes said in an in-house interview with the England and Wales Cricket Board published on Tuesday.

"When you're in a position of leadership along with someone else, if anyone thinks that you're always going to agree on everything, then it's just impossible."

England will be back in Test action in June, against New Zealand, before taking on Pakistan at home as well. "I'm very confident in mine and Brendon's ability to be able to work together, because we've done it for such a long period of time now, but work together in a slightly different way," Stokes said.

A Leeds shock for Carrick's Manchester United

EURO LEAGUES

Agencies
MANCHESTER

Leeds United's Noah Okafor scored twice as his side grabbed a morale-boosting 2-1 Premier League away win over bitter rival Manchester United, which had Lisandro Martinez sent off in the 56th minute for pulling the hair of Dominic Calvert-Lewin.

Manchester United remains third in the table on 55 points, ahead of Aston Villa on goal difference, while 15th-placed Leeds put some more daylight between itself and the teams battling relegation by moving up to 36 points, six ahead of Tottenham Hotspur in 18th.

Meanwhile, United boss Michael Carrick blasted referee Paul Tierney for sending off Martinez.

I don't even know what it looks like. It's not a pull, it's not a tug, it's not aggressive. He touches it and he gets sent off. Worst of all, he gets sent to overturn it, a clear and obvious error. Shocking."

Timely victory: Okafor ensured Leeds got some breathing space in the relegation battle. REUTERS

Fiorentina edges Lazio

In the Serie A, Fiorentina beat Lazio 1-0 and moved eight points clear of the relegation zone.

Fiorentina's season-best five-game unbeaten run lifted Paolo Vanoli's men above Cagliari into 15th place.

Robin Gosens got the only goal in the 28th minute when he headed home a cross from Jack Harrison, the winger on loan from Leeds United.

The results:
Premier League: Manchester United 1 (Casemiro 69) lost to Leeds 2 (Okafor 5, 29).
LaLiga: Levante 1 (Espi 83) bt Getafe 0.
Serie A: Fiorentina 1 (Gosens 28) bt Lazio 0.

Starc and Deepti bag Wisden Almanack's top honours

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Indian cricketers, including Shubman Gill and Deepti Sharma dominated the Wisden Almanack 2026 awards on Monday. Deepti was named Leading Women's Cricketer of the Year, with Mitchell Starc receiving the men's award. Abhishek Sharma was named Leading T20 Cricketer of the Year. Four Indians who starred in a 2-2 drawn Test series in England last year were among its Five Cricketers of the Year – Gill, Ravindra Jadeja, Rishabh Pant and Mohammed Siraj.

Champion hoopsters

Victorious: The Mysore District 'A' squad that won the State women's basketball league in Bengaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Play Smart gets the better of Herons by four wickets

BENGALURU: Play Smart beat Herons by four wickets in the Tiger Cup under-14 tournament.

The scores: Herons 129/9 in 30 overs (Nikhil Jayaram 52) lost to Play Smart 133/6 in 28.2 overs (Mahin Srikanth 48).
Magadi CC 108 in 26.4 overs lost to Kreeda Kshetra 110/2 in 13.2 overs.
Panthers 160/5 in 30 overs (T. Sachin 80, Mohammed Hamza 46) lost to RKO3 164/4 in 28.1 overs (Yathin Gowda 66).

Bayern's Neuer has his task cut out against Real

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
MUNICH

Neuer. AP

Bayern Munich veteran goalkeper Manuel Neuer is saddling up for Wednesday's Real Madrid quarterfinal second leg at home in what could be his final season before riding off into the sunset.

Though not the risk-hungry, 'sweeper keeper' of his prime, the two-time Champions League winner was outstanding in Bayern's 2-1 first-leg victory in Madrid while keeping Real's danger men Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Junior at bay.

Meanwhile, Declan Rice left Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta with another injury worry on the eve of its quarterfinal second leg against Sporting Lisbon after missing the training session on Tuesday.

Arsenal heads into Wednesday's fixture at the Emirates with a 1-0 lead from last week's opening leg against Sporting secured by Kai Havertz's late goal.

A southern gentleman caught in the wrong decade

BETWEEN WICKETS
Suresh Menon

The career of C.D. Gopinath, who passed away recently, is a commentary on Indian cricket in the 1950s. He was in the teams that won India's first-ever Test match and Tamil Nadu's first-ever Ranji Trophy, scoring a century in the latter match.

Gopinath's batting reflected his personality. It was stylish, organised, and sound. He was a gentleman who played a gentleman's game in the days when such things meant something.

By the 1950s, Indian cricket had shaken itself off to a degree from the influence of untalented Maharajahs in the team (in the 30s one of them was characterised as having "more Rolls Royces than runs" on an England tour). But it was yet to overcome the North-South divide, petty jealousies or the pernicious effects of individual egos, all of which were at their height.

In later years, Gopinath was honest about it in conversation, and tended to make light of it.

Of the 44 Tests India played in the decade, they won six, all at home. Gopinath played just eight of those Tests, and was the last direct link to India's first-ever Test win, against England in 1951-52.

Safety-first approach

The 50s was marked by safety-first tactics. This might have been a legacy of the War. India (and most of the world) played dreary Tests. Few believed in taking chances or pushing for victory if there was the slightest chance of defeat. It meant packing the team with batters – Gopinath batted No.8 in the victory Test. Not losing was more important than winning.

The North-South divide found its apogee in Gopinath's time. In the Chennai Test that marked India's first win, he was asked to go for quick runs ahead of the declaration, and lost his wicket trying.

He need not have bothered, the declaration was delayed! He took the catch that ended the match (Brian Statham off Vinoo Mankad), had his teammates sign the ball and displayed it in his Coonoor home.

On the 1952 tour of England that followed, the two players from the south, off-spinner Ghulam Ahmed and C.D. Gopinath were "treated like outsiders", according to the latter's autobiography, the well-produced *Beyond Cricket, A Life in Many Worlds*. Gopinath became a permanent No. 8, despite being in the team for his batting alone.

"The conversations among teammates were usually in Hindi, and I could not understand a word," he wrote. In an early match, "the captain said something that I did not comprehend."

The skipper was annoyed, and insisted that Gopinath learn Hindi. Gopinath, then 21, replied that "if he wanted to communicate with me, he had better speak in English."

On such tender threads did careers hang those days before the arrival of Tiger Pataudi and a more "Indian" thinking in the team. "I had fallen foul of authority," Gopinath says ruefully. The result? "When the ball was doing something, I went in with India tottering at 100 for six, and with the tail for company. On perfect batting strips, India would be 350 for six with a declaration around the corner."

Declining to tour

The following year, India were to tour the West Indies, and Gopinath was selected. Ghulam Ahmed, also selected, decided not to tour and advised Gopinath to do the same, saying, "after the way we were both treated in England, do you want to go through the same misery all over again, knowing that we'll have to deal with the same personnel?" Gopinath too declined to tour.

Over seven decades later, it might be difficult to imagine the muck of politics even talented players had to wade through to make the grade. Gopinath, his livelihood not dependent on the game, could afford to play it on his own terms. Others simply had no choice.

Thus did India lose players of the calibre of Subhash Gupte, Kripal Singh, Madhav Apte (whose Test average is nearly 50) in the decade from the 50s. Madurai's Kannayiram, who toured the West Indies in 1953, told me that he was shunned because of his friendship with the rival players then.

All this might sound strange today, when India rules the cricket world. But in getting here, many suffered. Gopinath was one of the lucky ones, something he was acutely aware of, and grateful for.

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